

UNIVERSITY^f
PENNSYLVANIA
LIBRARIES



Andrew Curry



ALIDE:

AN EPISODE OF GOETHE'S LIFE.

BY

EMMA LAZARUS,

AUTHOR OF "ADMETUS, AND OTHER POEMS," ETC.

PHILADELPHIA:

J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.

1874.

C

813
L45A

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1874, by

J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.,

In the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

~~~~~  
LIPPINCOTT'S PRESS,  
PHILADELPHIA.  
~~~~~

C O . S

TO MY FRIEND,
MRS. HOOPER,
THIS STORY
IS AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATEFULLY
INSCRIBED.

1873.

21700

P R E F A C E.

IT seems hardly necessary, but it may prevent misunderstanding, to state that I have incorporated in the ensuing pages whole passages from the autobiography of Goethe. Wherever it has been possible, he has been allowed to speak for himself, and thus no imagination has been exercised in the portrayal of his character. "Alide Duroc," on the contrary, is a purely imaginary creation, though her story is that of Frederika Brion.

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.		PAGE
DR. JULIUS STECK	. . . . .	9
CHAPTER II.		
THE PARSONAGE	. . . . .	18
CHAPTER III.		
ALIDE	. . . . .	30
CHAPTER IV.		
A MOONLIGHT WALK	. . . . .	42
CHAPTER V.		
GOETHE	. . . . .	52
CHAPTER VI.		
FIRST LOVE	. . . . .	79
CHAPTER VII.		
IN STRASBURG	. . . . .	87
CHAPTER VIII.		
HAPPINESS	. . . . .	96
CHAPTER IX.		
AFTER-THOUGHTS	. . . . .	116

	CHAPTER X.	PAGE
QUIET PLEASURES		122
	CHAPTER XI.	
IN THE SHADOW OF THE CATHEDRAL		134
	CHAPTER XII.	
HAMLET		147
	CHAPTER XIII.	
THE CLOUDS GATHER		159
	CHAPTER XIV.	
A STRANGE INTERVIEW		167
	CHAPTER XV.	
DRIFTING APART		174
	CHAPTER XVI.	
PARTING		181
	CHAPTER XVII.	
FREEDOM		193
	CHAPTER XVIII.	
LETTERS		201
EPILOGUE		207

ALIDE.

CHAPTER I.

DR. JULIUS STECK.

"IF it were not that I must play true to my clerical gown, Max, I could for very delight in the glory of this October afternoon caper one of my lately-learned waltzes on the roadside. Gods! what a gift life is on such a day as this! Do you not feel this mountain air tingling like wine through your veins? My blood is all aglow within me,—my heart is as light as flame." It was a rich, vibrant, sonorous voice, and yet it had a boyish ring of merriment that seemed in no wise to belong to the soberly-clad student who walked demurely by his companion's side through the quiet, shining meadows.

"Julius Steck!" exclaimed his comrade, who spoke with a lazy, good-humored drawl, "for the love of sport remember who and what you are. A learned young bachelor of divinity to begin by in-

voking the heathen gods,—to yearn after a waltz in the open fields, and a heart like flame, forsooth! a pretty thing to carry into a country parsonage to kindle a conflagration among the lasses!"

"Nay, Max," returned the other, "I will be grave enough when occasion requires. How could I so soon forget my last and dearest sweetheart behind us in the city,—the Minster of Strasburg? Is not this the first bright afternoon since early June that we two have not mounted at sunset to that spacious platform high above the dusky streets, and quaffed our Rhenish to the dying day? And you fancy that I will throw away a heart devoted to the loyal service of my Lady of the Cathedral on the first pair of apple-colored cheeks and china-blue eyes that we meet on the wayside? Besides," he added, with a sudden mock gravity, "do I look like a fellow to captivate a pretty damsel?" And he doffed his broad-brimmed clerical hat and looked full and squarely at Max.

Was the lad a consummate actor who could assume at will whatever countenance he desired, or was this expression of sheepish pedantry natural to the possessor of that resonant voice? It must have been clever pantomime, for as Max saw it he burst into uncontrollable laughter, that resounded with jolly echoes through the responsive air. The outline of the face from brow to throat was delicate and strong as that of a young Greek god, and yet a ludicrous and almost homely effect was given by

the sleek brown locks combed smoothly back from the temples and turned behind the ears, by the thickly-framed gold spectacles which obstructed any gleam from the dark eyes behind them, and, above all, by this prim look of mingled shrewdness and timidity. He was taller than his companion, but the proportions of his figure were concealed by the long black gown, which formed the principal part of his costume as a theological student.

“Capital, capital, Dr. Steck!” exclaimed Max, clapping his hand on the young bachelor’s shoulder. “But make haste and cover your head, for in a few moments we shall be in sight of the parsonage. And yet I can hardly say whether you are best with or without that hideous plate of a hat. At any rate, I am not responsible for whatever happens while you are in my charge. I warn you beforehand that the girls are pretty and engaging, and as for them, if they can listen to—yes, or look with patience on—such an infernal Jesuitical milksop, I will wash my hands of them all.”

They walked on for a few minutes in silence, Max with his hand still resting affectionately on Steck’s shoulder, and Steck with his head upraised, eagerly inhaling the honeyed air of the harvest-fields, and, with the eyes of an artist rather than of a boy just turned twenty, gazing at the green and purple masses and sun-bathed outlines of the peaks that stood out against the pale gold sky. There was just enough breeze to make a continuous

rustle and murmur in the glistening leaves overhead, and to send long-rolling ripples and waves of motion over the grass of the wide-lying meadows. A clear bird-carol now and then, the incessant all-pervading drone of the crickets, at intervals the merry laughter of voices in a far-away meadow, prolonged by the myriad echoes of the neighborhood,—these sweet out-door sounds were all that broke upon the ears of the two young men; and the gentleness, the peace, the unspeakable beauty of the October landscape seemed to gain upon them, and to overpower with quieting suggestions even the exuberant buoyancy of spirits natural to their age.

Max Waldstein was a genial, open-hearted fellow of two or three and twenty. A square, somewhat receding brow, wide blue eyes, a highly-colored complexion, a round, fair, curly head, set off with coarse and prominent ears, a large mouth, adorned with healthy white teeth, a thick, well-shaped nose, and a projecting jaw, overgrown with a reddish-yellow beard,—all these formed an excellent index to the mind and character of the young law-student, who had attached himself almost as to a girl to the magnetic, myriad-sided nature of his fellow-lodger, the boy-artist. New and unaccountable to plain Max were the mercurial moods, the exaltations and despondencies, the irrepressible, child-like delight occasioned by such simple things as a burst of sunlight on a cloudy day, the sudden, unex-

pected song of a bird, a glimpse of a fair woman-face, a rhyme of some old poet, a shade of color on some faded canvas, or, above all, the outlines and structure of Strasburg Cathedral. But Waldstein made no attempt to follow or fathom the caprices of his imaginative friend. Like many others in that grave old minster-shadowed city, he was led out of himself into an enthusiasm of admiration and affection for the brilliant, beautiful young favorite of the gods, who, bringing all the gifts, had burst upon Strasburg and taken up his abode there early in the preceding spring. Numberless were the holiday excursions planned by these two youthful heads and enjoyed with a wide circle of boon companions, the spice of such amusements being not unfrequently heightened by an escapade somewhat wilder than usual, an adventure of more than ordinary daring, on the part of the younger of the two. Max's only gift, a shrewd, practical sense, enabled him readily to discern the qualities of those around him, and a loyal, generous nature, unspoiled by affectation or envy, brought him into sympathy with men of far higher capacities than his own. With whimsical self-depreciation, he was forever wishing to display the endless talents and attractions of his comrade, who must be brought forth into the light at all costs, forgiven any mad prank, and allowed to follow his pleasure as he chose, in consideration of the halo about his head and the tenderness of his heart.

“Let us make the most of the lad while he is with us,” Waldstein would say; “such a youth is not for our little Strasburg circle of good fellows. What can he not do? What does he not adorn in touching? It rests but with himself to be the painter, the poet, the tragedian, the statesman—what do I know?—the genius of the age. Come, comrades, let us up to his room now, and drag him from his jurisprudence, and make a day of it on the river.”

We all know that in later years neither the sweetest allurements nor the sharpest trials could swerve this royal nature from its chosen path of serenity and wisdom. But at this early period, with the fulness of so rich a life seething in his veins, in the first fresh wonder and delight, with every wreath of honor awaiting apparently but the reach of his outstretched hand to claim and bind it about his brow, who shall say that the intoxication did not mount to his exalted brain, engendering a boyish vanity and self-consciousness, sending through his frame an occasional thrill of not ignoble pride in the very wealth of his own personality?

For many weeks Waldstein had been trying to prevail upon his friend to accompany him to the parsonage, some six leagues beyond Strasburg, where he was wont to spend much of his leisure time, invariably descanting after his visit upon the hospitality of Pastor Duroc and his wife and the beauty of the country surrounding their home,

and occasionally letting slip a significant allusion to the charms of the elder daughter, Rahel. But the boy had always an excuse for declining: he must go study the Cathedral, and work out the unexecuted conception of the architect's brain in leaving incomplete that bold and aerial spire; he must prepare himself for the approaching examination, and devote himself more assiduously to his ponderous volumes of jurisprudence, for which he had originally come to Strasburg; or now was the moment to saunter down to the river-side and add a few strokes to his sketch of the city at sunset. Finally, when Max had ceased to press the point, the capricious lad one morning proposed the visit himself. His delicate fancy had been aroused the previous evening by an exquisite prose idyl which he had read before he slept. It was a translation recently made of a story of English clerical life. The homely pathos, the quaint simplicity, the pleasing variety of natural incidents that enlivened the sprightly flow of the narrative, the healthy atmosphere that breathed of trim, inland, hawthorn-hedged meadows, all these wrought upon his lightly-moved spirit and gave him the desire to transport himself to kindred scenes. Early in the morning he burst into Waldstein's room with the "Vicar of Wakefield" in his hand.

"Read it at once!" he exclaimed; "there is art, there is nature! How many of our dreary German treatises cannot this little book outweigh with its

searching insight, its naïf truthfulness! Here is a page of life that I have never studied,—never known. While I have been musing in the grim shadow of the Minster, and trying to animate the iron-handed heroes of a mediæval age, what have I overlooked! The smiling fields, the endless minutiae of a thousand happy homes, the passions, the joys, the troubles, that surround me on every side. Max, dear Max, may I go with you to the Durocs'?"

Waldstein could scarcely refrain from smiling at the wistful tone in which the question was asked. It was like the lad to crave that as a grace which it was but a pleasure to confer. He had as many coaxing, affectionate tricks of voice and manner as a woman. Max assented with delight, and named that very day for the excursion. And now his comrade, full of odd freaks, begged to be allowed to go, not as the wild boy-artist of Strasburg, but as a serious student of these pious, pastoral lives. Thus was the harmless incognito contrived, and thus it was that Max was escorting his friend, disguised as a theological scholar and bearing the name of Dr. Julius Steck, to the home of the Durocs.

Steck was the first to interrupt the sweet quietness which was not silence. "How beautifully clear is this little mountain-brook alongside of us!" he said. "See, it has followed us all the way from the Drusenheim inn."

"I should rather say," answered Waldstein, "that we have followed it; and in truth it is the surest guide for us: as we keep along this path, bearing its channel always in sight, the first bend in its course will bring us in view of our goal."

A few paces more led them to the curve, and then only a single narrow field lay between them and the parsonage.

CHAPTER II.

THE PARSONAGE.

IT looked more like an ancient farm-house than the home of the parish priest, and was separated by a considerable distance from the village church, whose humble spire and glittering vane peered above the clustered trees beyond. It seemed a very antique and weather-stained homestead, but wore rather the quaint picturesqueness that just precedes decay, than the actual dilapidation of ruin itself. It would have been hard to tell with what color it had originally been decorated, for it was now sunburned and rainwashed into a streaky, sombre gray, to which this gorgeous October light gave a certain mellow warmth of its own; and the walls were so covered with the glossy leaves of the ivy, the porch was so overgrown with the interlocked stems of the honeysuckle, that comparatively little of the dwelling itself was left bare. In front was a small, carefully-tended garden, where the autumn roses were glowing; but nearly all the adjacent grounds were devoted to what would have seemed the interests of a goodly farm; the gray old orchard rich with red and yellow globes

twinkling among the branches or lying half buried in the soft turf below; the vine-trellises beyond, with their large, dusky leaves, bearing their splendid blue and golden-green fruitage freely in the open air; and on the other side of the house, the thriving kitchen-garden with its stripes of varied verdure,—all prosperously basking in the radiant sunshine of harvest-tide. Some of the windows were thrown open for the air and light to play through the dwelling; from one of them a white curtain, detached from its fastenings, was blowing. A perky little hen, with her brood close after her, was strutting along the garden-lane and pecking near the walls of the manse, but no other living creature seemed to be stirring about the premises.

“A queer, quiet old place it is,” said Steck, taking in all the details at a glance.

“Yes,” said Waldstein, dryly; “it is younger inside.”

The gate was open, and they walked noiselessly through, frightening the hen and her young ones into a brisk trot towards the barnyard. They had almost reached the doorway before they saw, half reclining on a long wooden bench in the porch, the portly figure of the pastor, his face concealed by a large volume held up before his eyes.

“Good-evening, Father Duroc,” cried Max.

Their host started, let fall his book from before him, and disclosed a jovial, weak, handsome face, but little marked by age, whose thick dark eye-

brows and rosy coloring contrasted strikingly with the pure white of his unpowdered hair.

"I have taken you by surprise this time," said Waldstein, "and have brought my friend, Dr. Julius Steck, of Frankfort. He is a serious fellow, young as he looks; one after your own heart, an indefatigable student, who wishes thoroughly to examine our parochial customs before he enters upon his active duties."

"Welcome! welcome both!" said the pastor, heartily, giving each a hand. "Any friend of yours, Waldstein, has, you know, a double welcome, and Dr. Steck could not have found a better place to complete his studies than the oldest parsonage in Alsace, though the vicar says it himself."

"I shall be proud to put myself under your guidance," said Steck, with becoming modesty. "Your well-known research, your profound——"

"Tut! tut!" interrupted the pleased pastor. "I have but looked into such scant volumes as strayed across my path. But an apt and ardent scholar is my delight, and such a one is a rarity in these superficial days. Ah, Waldstein, your eyes are wandering after the lasses, I'll be bound. They have strolled off with the Mütterchen toward the brook-side to enjoy this bright afternoon. But we can have a good hour's chat in the library before they return."

"We heard their laughter as we came along

from Drusenheim," said Waldstein. "If Otto be not with them, why could not I? Might they not be pleased——"

"I see your drift," exclaimed the pastor. "Well, be off to the meadows, young gallant, and bring them safely home; they will all be glad to see thee. Meantime, this serious youth and I will discuss our graver matters."

Max, with a roguish glance at Steck, ran off like a dismissed schoolboy down the slope behind the house, and was almost immediately out of sight in the dip of the valley below. Steck, however, with his head full of the "Vicar of Wakefield," and possessing in the highest degree the artist's capacity to invest with interest the most commonplace of characters, was delighted at the prospect of a conversation with the Dr. Primrose of Sesenheim.

"I do not wonder, sir," he began, "that you have brought your literature to so attractive a seat. I, too, often make my studies in the open air; not that my eyes will wander from my beloved manuscript, but I fancy that the mind has there a larger scope, a clearer perception, a stronger energy of retention."

"Surely, surely," assented the pastor. "I am fully of your opinion, Dr. Steck. So, since it pleases you, we will take our seats here in the porch. At this genial season, the hospitality of my home extends far beyond the shelter of my

roof-tree, over all these shining acres." And he waved his hand with a natural pride towards the smiling landscape.

"You are perhaps surprised," he went on, garrulously, "to find me so miserably quartered in a wealthy village and with a lucrative benefice. Long since, it has been promised me by the parish, and even by those in higher places, that the house shall be rebuilt; many plans have been already drawn, examined, and altered,—none of them altogether rejected, and none carried into execution. This has lasted so long that I scarcely know how to control my impatience."

"Perhaps," suggested Steck, "if you were to display a little impatience, you might sooner succeed in forcing them to pursue the affair more vigorously."

"Ah!" sighed the pastor, with an air of discouragement, "you do not know with what people I have to deal. The duke is away the better part of the year, hunting, traveling, killing time as he best may. Herr Klug, the former intendant, was anxious enough to promote the welfare of the parish. Indeed, it was he who proposed the renovation of the manse; then were the plans drawn and deliberated upon; but before we could come to any decision he was removed, to make way for a French successor, M. Guédin. 'Well, Käthchen,' said I to Mother Duroc, 'we can congratulate ourselves now,—we shall soon have a spruce

new parsonage when this active young fellow takes the lead.' 'Wait to whistle till you are out of the wood, Moritz,' said the prudent mother, and she was right. It was only the last new idea that M. Guédin could seize with any interest. When he saw the many difficulties to be overcome, and heard of the many tastes to be consulted, it was too much for the Gallic genius, and he has long betaken himself to more congenial occupations."

"But your people," interposed Steck, highly amused at the old man's naïf confidence, "why should not they co-operate to secure their pastor a more comfortable home? Though for my part, sir, the beauty of this picturesque old farmstead, the thoroughly German character of its construction, please me so much that I should be loth to hear of a change."

"Ay, lad," returned the pastor, "it is well for you, who come and take a glance at the outside, to fall into ecstasies over the woodbine on the porch, the moss on the tiles, the wee diamonds set in the heavy gables that form our windows. But it is an inconvenient picturesqueness for the pastor, where a few stout beams of oak, some moderate-sized panes of glass, and a couple of serviceable chimneys might remedy all. But come in with me, and examine for yourself how we fare."

With these words he rose and led Steck into the house. They passed through a commodious hall, furnished like a room with rugs and seats, into the

library, where the late sunshine was streaming. Steck was so delighted with the quaint wooden bookcases, the high mantel-shelf with its painted tiles, and the tokens on every side of the habitual presence of youth and womankind,—the flowers in the windows, the festoons of fresh ivy between the prettily-designed landscapes, the open harpsichord, with the last song still upon it, the charming disorder of the tables, scattered with books, writing-materials, sketching-crayons, and embroidery,—that he did not care to note that the deep-ledged windows were indeed somewhat out of date, the ceilings stained and smoked, and the furniture worn and shabby.

“I cannot help it, sir,” he said, turning to the pastor with a deprecating smile, “but I think it all charming. And what a glorious outlook from this westward window!”

“Yes, yes,” answered the pastor, a little testily, “the outlook is good enough; it is as fair a site as any in Alsace.” And all his good humor returned as he leaned with his guest over the broad sill and looked out at the rich spread of vineyard, stream, and meadow, terminated by the gorgeous boundary of the Vosges, with their aerial outlines and indescribable luxuriance of tint glowing in the last rays of the sunseting.

“Here be our saunterers coming along the road,” said he, shading his eyes with his hand. “But where could they have left Alide?”

Steck looked at the figures advancing through the fields, and recognized Waldstein foremost, in apparently earnest colloquy with his companion, a tall, slender woman attired in sober colors. In his mind he immediately named her the charming Rahel, and could scarcely repress a smile at the staid, demure character of the attractions that had captivated his friend's fancy. A few paces behind them hastened a younger figure, with bright-colored ribbons flying and white skirt gleaming between the bushes and tree-trunks as she came along. She had loitered to gather some field-flowers; and as she almost ran forward to rejoin her companions, she seemed in Steck's eyes a very Ruth, with her blue and red blossoms in her hand, and her wide straw hat dangling from her head and encircling like an aureole the dark-brown locks.

"There she is, sir," said Steck, who thought the pastor must have failed to see this young girl, lingering purposely, as he was pleased to imagine, behind the sweethearts.

"No," said Dr. Duroc, "that is Rahel." Then with a sudden burst of laughter, clapping Steck upon the shoulder, he exclaimed, "I see your mistake! It will make a gallant compliment for K  thchen when she comes in. It is not the first time the mother has been said to look as young as her daughters." Before Steck had time to reply, the couple entered the room.

"Here is a young fellow, Kitty," said the blunt

pastor, "who has mistaken you for your own child. Madame Duroc, Dr. Julius Steck."

"I am glad to see you, sir," said madame, shaking his hand cordially.

In spite of her slight figure, he could see now that the beauty of her intelligent countenance was indeed somewhat faded. She scrutinized him narrowly with a woman's alert intuition, very different from the unsuspecting confidence of the pastor; but, turning to her husband, she went on, kindly, "You always have your jest, Moritz; but you will make the young gentleman blush if you expose so freely his mistakes. Has Alide come home yet?"

"No," answered the pastor, with surprise; "I thought she was with you."

"So she was, but she left us a good half-hour since with Goetz."

"In that case she has not returned," said Dr. Duroc, "for I have been sitting with Dr. Steck in the porch, and we could not have missed seeing her."

"In the porch!" cried Madame Duroc, "and Dr. Steck has had nothing to refresh himself after his long walk from the inn!"

"That is the way with her, boys," said the simple pastor, as she left them, "always thoughtful for others."

At this moment Rahel burst rather noisily into the room, bringing the sweet fragrance of the fields along with her.

"Where is Alide?" she asked, without noticing the stranger.

"Rahel," said the pastor, in a tone of reproof, "here is a visitor, Dr. Steck; that is hardly the way to greet him."

"I beg your pardon, papa," said the young girl, with heightened color, "and yours too, sir, whom I am happy to welcome," extending her hand with almost as little embarrassment and as much cordiality as her mother. "But, papa, I am uneasy about Alide; she should have been home long ago. I must go seek her." And she hastened away.

"We are all rather foolish about our Alide," said the pastor, apologetically; "she is the youngest of us,—but I have no fear for her. You will soon see them all, Dr. Steck, and I am particularly anxious for you to know my boy Otto; he is a lad of much promise, though a trifle reserved, and if he can but select such companions as yourself and Waldstein, I shall rest content."

"I shall be proud to know them all," said Steck, with sincerity, "for I do not remember when before I have been so happy in a family circle." And his eyes wandered to the door in search of the youngest daughter, whose prolonged absence created such a stir in the household, and occasioned an agreeable flutter of expectation in his own breast.

As he looked, the door was slowly opened, and Madame Duroc re-entered, bearing a tray with a flask of home-made wine, a china basket filled with the fruits of their orchard and vineyard, and a dish of her own sweet-cakes. Waldstein, who was quite

at home in the family, cleared one of the tables and helped Madame Duroc to set the plates and glasses, and they all placed themselves around it.

"Kitty is proud of her Rheinwein," said the pastor, as he filled Steck's goblet, "and the surest way to her heart is to show your appreciation of it." And he clinked his own glass against Steck's and raised it to his lips.

"That she may well be," responded the youth, as he quaffed a long draught. "It is a most delicious vintage."

"You know," said Madame Duroc, with assumed modesty, "the parson's wine is always supposed to have a peculiar flavor."

"Never mind, Käthchen," said the pastor; "we will hold our own opinion still. The last time you tasted it, Max, was the evening young Vogel was here paying his court to Rahel. It seemed rather bitter in your mouth then, eh, Waldstein?"

"It was not the wine, sir," answered honest Max, with a girl's blush overspreading his face. Just then Rahel herself returned.

"I cannot imagine what has become of Alide!" she cried. "I have been half-way across the meadow without catching a glimpse of her. None of the servants have seen her, and I have been waiting at the porch ever since. It is really provoking, for I suppose she will come in soon with some ridiculous excuse for having made us all so uneasy."

"Is Goetz with her?" asked the mother, rising and looking anxiously from the window.

"Yes," replied Rahel, "or I should be really worried instead of vexed."

"It is indeed provoking!" said Madame Duroc, nervously. "I cannot understand where the child has gone. She seems to be always either loitering behind us or running out of sight ahead. I shall forbid her to leave us at this hour again; she is far too wild and fearless for her years. She seems to forget she is no longer a child."

"Let her alone," said the father, with great composure; "she has already come back."

All eyes were turned to where he pointed as he spoke, and there, under the low doorway, with the soft light from the western window falling full upon her face, stood Alide.

CHAPTER III.

ALIDE.

SHE did not look over sixteen, but it was maidenhood, not childhood, that glanced forth from the gray-blue eyes and sent a rosy flush rippling over the sweet, wistful face as she heard herself so freely criticised before the two young men. Her neck seemed almost too delicate for the large fair braids on her elegant little head. They were twisted loosely like a crown above her brow, and again looped in long thick plaits around either ear. These, indeed, formed her chief beauty, in color no less than in luxuriance and texture, for they had not the lustreless, flaxen hue most frequent in Germany, but a warm, glossy gold, nearer auburn than yellow. It was the indescribable radiance caused by the perfect blending of the divine tints of gold and pink and white, added to the brightness of the large eyes, which made her the lovely vision that she seemed at this moment to Steck; for her features were more irregular than those of either her mother or her sister: the nose was short and slightly upturned, her nationality strongly marked in the breadth of the upper part of the face, and the mouth

a trifle large. But then the teeth were brilliant (Steck could see, for she was smiling), and the full chin was cloven by a dimple. Like Rahel, she "wore nothing but German," as they termed it, though the national attire was almost obsolete in Alsace. A full white skirt, with a furbelow, stopped just short of the dainty ankles, disclosing the neatest little feet, and a close-fitting white bodice and coquettish black taffeta apron completed her costume. Her broad-brimmed straw hat was slung over her arm, and its long blue ribbons added the only touch of color that she wore.

"Thus truly a most charming star arose in this rural heaven," Steck wrote many years later, in describing this exquisite apparition of youth and grace as she first stood before him. And such was the substance, if not the form, of his thought as his eyes rested upon her. But the next moment, for the first time since his disguise, the consciousness of his own appearance overpowered him with shame and confusion, and he felt the hot blood tingle in his face. Where were now the glib speech, the insinuating address, the manly assurance and self-confidence that had grown upon him with the knowledge of his gifts and had never before failed him? It was like a disagreeable dream to hear the mention of his assumed name, to see this beautiful creature make him a graceful reverence, and to feel so keenly the ridiculousness of his own position, as he returned with much constraint her salutation.

In spite of her costume, she seemed city-bred, for her greeting was quite different from the rustic cordiality of her mother and sister, and he fancied he detected lurking around the corners of her mouth a mischievous smile.

"So you have come back at last," began Rahel, with no little irritation; "I suppose it is nothing to you that we have been watching for you since sunset, and imagining a thousand impossible accidents."

"I am sorry to have made you uneasy, Rahel," answered Alide, quietly.

"What new folly or sentimentalism has kept you out till this hour?" persisted Rahel, her ill humor increased by her sister's imperturbable composure.

It was evident that Alide's intuitive refinement prevented her displaying before a stranger any impatient temper. She loosened her hat from her arm, laid it on the table, and, turning to her mother, kissed her cheek like a child. "Mamma," said she, "I am really sorry that I should have distressed you. Did you not know that Goetz was with me? I only went to the village, and, as Herr Waldstein said papa was engaged with a strange gentleman, I took the road behind the house, without disturbing him to tell him where I had gone. Besides, the days seem to grow short so suddenly."

"Well, my child," replied Madame Duroc, returning her caress, "another time you will try to be more thoughtful: we will say no more about it

now." And she glanced significantly at her elder daughter. Rahel shrugged her shoulders, as much as to say, "It is always the same;" but the mother's calm decision sufficed to disperse at once the little cloud, and the family were soon chatting together in the gayest and most friendly way about uncles, aunts, cousins, gossips, and guests, and Steck learned how much he had to promise himself from so numerous and lively a circle.

Max was entirely at his ease, and added his comments and scraps of news as familiarly as the rest; but Steck felt himself quite apart from the cheerful group, especially as the consciousness of his false position confused him more and more. As he listened, he took occasion to observe them all, and thought with inexpressible astonishment that he was actually in the Wakefield family. To be sure, the pastor had not the earnest gravity and discretion of Dr. Primrose; but it would be difficult to find in real life a single person uniting all the admirable qualities of the English vicar; and, besides, the characters of Goldsmith were only reversed, for Frau Duroc had all the dignity and seriousness that her husband lacked. One could not see her without at once honoring and reverencing her, and the results of high breeding were visible in her manner, which was gentle, unconstrained, pleasant, and attractive. If Rahel had not the celebrated beauty of Olivia, yet she was pretty, lively, and impetuous; her gestures were more

animated, her voice had a shriller ring, her laugh was more frequent, her manners more coquettish, than her sister's; and these peculiarities, added to the scarlet ribbons twisted in her brown hair, and the sparkling vivacity of her merry dark eyes, gave a somewhat over-pronounced, provincial tone to her appearance. However, her spirits were so high, and she prattled on with such a sprightly pleasantry, that Waldstein was bewitched, and Steck himself might have been attracted by her picturesque individuality had it not been for Alide. She would answer well, he thought, for another Sophia; for all that is said of Sophia is that she is amiable, and who was ever amiable in the original signification of the word—worthy to be loved—if Alide were not?

“It is a shame to play a joke upon such good people,” said Steck to himself, fancying it was his conscience that pricked him, when it was only his vanity that was aroused; and, when all eyes were turned from him, he quickly removed the gold spectacles and passed his hand lightly through his hair. As he did so, Max looked at him and smiled maliciously, but discreetly held his peace.

For some time Alide had taken little part in the conversation, and had answered absently the direct questions addressed to her. “That strange young doctor,”—she was thinking, and it was her conscience, not her vanity, that spoke,—“he is bashful, to be sure, and he blushes like a girl; but is it kind

in us to leave him there alone? Papa seems to have forgotten his presence, and mamma is always so quiet. I must try myself to make him feel a little more at home." And she rose from her low chair at the pastor's feet and moved towards Steck. But as she looked at him she drew back and almost lost courage, startled at the transformation which the pseudo-doctor had undergone. The rapid movement of his hand had sufficed to change the whole appearance of his head. His brown hair waved naturally in soft curls, and though the sudden glance of his full, deeply-set eyes was peculiarly keen and penetrating, yet the drooping lids and heavy lashes gave them in repose an indescribably gentle expression. Perhaps she would not have arisen at all if she had known he looked like that. But it was too late to return. He was sitting by the open harpsichord, and had taken up the song that lay upon it.

"Can you play yourself, Dr. Steck?" she asked. His habitual tact and ease were restored to him by the young girl's expression of surprise, which he had not failed to notice.

"I play after a fashion," he replied; "I cannot pretend to much skill."

"But you will let us judge for ourselves?" pleaded she, with a winning smile.

"Surely, mademoiselle, if it pleases you." And he went to seat himself before the instrument.

"What is this?" interrupted the pastor, turning

towards them. "Why, Alide, you certainly will not ask the guest to furnish the entertainment? You must serve him first yourself, with a performance or a song."

"Indeed, I am not in the mood," remonstrated Alide, "but I will do my best." And without affectation she placed herself before the harpischord.

It was a primitive, tinkling little affair, evidently neglected by the schoolmaster, who should have tuned it long since. Alide played a couple of pieces in the ordinary mechanical style of country amateurs, and then sang with rather more sentiment a brief, tender, melancholy song. But Steck had little knowledge of the art, and if the performance had been faultless its merits would have been lost upon him. He scarcely knew how or what the girl was singing; he heard, or rather felt, the fresh clear voice ring through his brain; he watched the dainty white hands resting lightly on the old black keys, he noted the dewy, earnest eyes, the brightly flushed face, the royal little head, and at that moment for him there was nothing else in the world.

"Ah!" she cried, suddenly, "I cannot succeed. I am not in the vein." And she rose with a smile, or rather, as Steck said, "with that touch of serene joy that ever reposed on her countenance." "I cannot play; and yet it is not the fault of the harpischord or my master. Let us go into the open air, and I will sing you one of my Alsatian songs,—they sound much better there."

He followed her with alacrity. The moist freshness of the twilight breeze, rich with the heavy fragrance of the honeysuckle overhead, blew towards them as Steck opened the door, and they stood out together in the porch. Around the wide gray meadows the mountains loomed huge and sombre against the faded sky, and the moon, still rosy from the vapors of the horizon, was slowly floating upward. Alide raised her head to see if any stars were yet shining, and all the white purity of heaven, which was neither light nor color, but something between the two, descended like a benediction upon the sweet flower-face. In her blithe, child-like voice, that vibrated with infinitely more mellowness in the large air, she began her favorite Alsatian ballad :

“I come from a forest as dark as the night,
And, believe me, I love thee, my only delight”—

caroling forth the refrain with the clear flute-notes of a bird. It had a strange, powerful effect upon the artist's impressionable temperament. When the song was ended he did not speak.

“Why do you not thank me for my performance? I have done my best,” she said, innocently, turning quickly around and looking him full in the face. His eyes were quite wet, and his whole frame was trembling with excitement.

“It is too beautiful,” he said, in a low voice.

"Let us go in," exclaimed Alide, abruptly. "It is chilly out here."

Lights had been brought, and the family were just preparing to go to supper as they re-entered the room. The first words that Steck heard were sufficient to recall him fully to himself. "Wolfgang Goethe!" Max was saying, as if in answer to a question, while the whole group hung upon his speech. "Of course I know him,—all Strasburg knows him already——" Then, seeing Steck, he laughed, hesitated, and finally added, with some awkwardness, "Well, after all, there is nothing remarkable about him: he is only a jovial young fellow, like the rest of us." Steck looked at him with a startled glance of inquiry, and, being met by a mystifying expression on the part of Max, he resumed his prim student's manner.

At the supper-table Alide sat directly opposite him, and as she noted his demure appearance an unaccountable fear and trouble overcame her. And yet a powerful fascination led her eyes constantly towards his face, until she found herself forgetting the food before her and blushing with shame lest her preoccupation had been remarked. As the wine flowed freely, by imperceptible degrees his countenance became again mobile and eloquent as it had flashed upon her in the porch.

In the midst of supper the door was opened, and a lad of about seventeen sprang into the room, nodded in a half-shy half-familiar way to Steck

and Waldstein, and seated himself boldly among them. "What, Moses, too!" exclaimed Steck, involuntarily.

"How do you mean?" asked the pastor, with surprise. "This is my son Otto."

"Oh, sir, I beg your pardon," replied Steck, with a laugh. "It is a foolish habit I have of trying to realize the ideal world. I have lately been reading a charming story of English life,—the description of a country parson's home and family,—and I seem to be among them all since I have been with you. This brave lad was the only one wanting to complete the novelist's group."

"That is a fantastic trick," said Dr. Duroc. "Since you have such romantic tastes, I have no doubt you will be delighted to visit the interesting localities about us here. Not a hill, a grove, nor a waterfall but has its own tradition; my girls can tell you them all."

"I have, indeed, too much pleasure to promise myself here," answered Steck, eagerly. "But when will you allow me to guide you through my beloved Strasburg? There, too, every stone in the streets has its history."

"My girls are not partial to a town-life," said Madame Duroc. "Their city cousins are always begging them to go, yet I cannot prevail on them to leave the parsonage."

"I cannot abide it!" cried Rahel. "It is very well for Cousins Anna and Gretchen; they have

adopted all the French modes; but as for poor Alide and myself, we feel like peasants in our German."

"Nevertheless," interposed Alide, gently, "you are very kind to ask us, Dr. Steck; and if we ever do find ourselves in Strasburg we may call upon you to remember your promise."

"Oh, I am sure you would forget all your prejudices if you would but let me take you through the town!" exclaimed Steck, with enthusiasm. "It is only in a city that one can see the thousandfold life of man fully and worthily developed. There the broad, rich current of our modern industries flows past the stately monuments of an antique world. A single pitiful existence cannot suffice for the soul's insatiable craving after boundless, interminable activity. One must feel one's self in all. These busy comers and goers, these merchants, students, artists, can be made to serve the single master-mind and carry his thought in ever-widening circles to the ends of the earth. By Jove! when I feel myself so young, so favored, so thoroughly alive, I long to taste the sweets and bitter-nesses of a hundred existences, to pass through all experiences. It is for me—I please myself by thinking—to study the endless aspects under which our national character reveals itself,—to snatch the secret of the ardent aspirations, the noble discontent, of our German youth. It is for me——"

"Steck," interrupted Max, in a dry, quiet tone, from the opposite side of the table, "don't you think you would like to see the meadows by moonlight? Since we have all finished our supper, what does madame say to a walk in the fields?"

"Oh, charming!" exclaimed Rahel; but Frau Duroc rose silently, and Alide, who had sat with downcast eyes and abated breath, started and looked up with a bewildered sort of disappointment. Again she saw the strange student blush like a girl, and cast, as it were, a mask of dulness over his face. The fire died out from his eyes, a constrained, unpleasant expression replaced the ardent enthusiasm that had ennobled every feature, and once more the shy, awkward Dr. Steck was standing before her.

CHAPTER IV.

A MOONLIGHT WALK.

THERE was a little confusion in the hall, of shawl-wrappings and head-coverings, and injunctions from Madame Duroc to her daughters to beware of the wet grass and the dripping leaves.

"I cannot get this hood over my hair," cried Alide, who had thrown a white cloak over her shoulders and was vainly trying to draw the hood over her high braids. "Mamma, it is a mild, soft evening. I will go just as I am." And so the whole party went out into the bright night.

The moon was by this time high in the heavens ; the meadows were bathed in a lustrous haze, the brook glittered from unexpected places, the vineyard was full of black shadows, and the trees of the orchard allowed broken rays to fall between their branches, checkering the colorless turf with patches of light and darkness. The sound of the brook stumbling over its pebbles, of the pleasant little gusts of breeze as they went shuddering through the crisp foliage, the sudden soft thump of an apple dropping on the grass, and the incessant song of the crickets, were all that could be

heard even in the intense quietness of the autumn night.

For a moment the whole group gazed in silence, but Rahel's voice soon broke forth, chattering to Max as he drew her arm through his and led her towards the orchard. "Look! one can almost see the color of the roses!" she cried. "Wait a minute, and I will pluck this one,—it is quite overblown: how wet it is! Ah, I have run that horrid thorn in my finger! Thanks. It was Alide who had them planted on either side of the gate, where——" And so the girlish voice died away in the distance, and the two figures were lost among the shadows and shrubbery.

"Let us go towards the vineyard," suggested Madame Duroc; "Rahel has taken the other path, but Dr. Steck should see the pretty outlook from the opposite side of the trellises. Otto, give me your arm, so that I may not step upon the grass; the dew is almost like rain. Dr. Steck, if you follow us you will see the prospect to advantage."

"Go," said the pastor. "I will wait here till you come back. I have not much relish for these damp walks." And Steck, with Alide upon his arm, followed Madame Duroc and her son through the moonlit lanes. He looked down at the girl's face beside him, with her hair gleaming like pale gold, and the liquid lustre in her eyes which only the moon can shed. About her form everything was white and shadowy as her thin cloak was lifted and

fluttered around her by the cool air. He felt the elastic spring of her gait timed perfectly with his own footsteps, the scarcely perceptible pressure of her arm upon his own, the nearness of the warm, bright head, and a delicious joy possessed him. But Alide had not recovered from the disturbing sense of fear with which this strange young man inspired her, and she was resolved not to allow the sweet influences of the scene and hour to work upon herself or her companion. Almost as volubly as Rahel, and as little subdued by the wonderful charm of the night, she prattled artlessly about all that concerned her daily life. In the perfect stillness, her mother, a few steps in advance, could have heard every word she uttered.

"Of course you will know us all," she said, "for whenever a stranger stops with us he is sure to return often and become familiar with our whole family circle. There are so many of us, uncles, aunts, and cousins included, that we make quite a little world of our own."

"And among them all," said Steck, in a low, earnest tone, "is there not one who attracts you particularly?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Alide, "and many more than one. If you could only know my aunt Christiane! She is fully sixty years old, and beautiful as an angel. She had a strange, tragic story connected with her youth; but the longer she lives the more peaceful life becomes to her, she says. And,

indeed, the mutual devotion between herself and her two sons seems enough to compensate for many, many trials of the past."

"And they—your cousins," interposed Steck, "are they also such romantic characters?"

"Dr. Steck, you must not laugh at my enthusiasm," said she, seriously: "my cousins are—what such a mother must make them." And Steck fancied it was confusion that made her draw her cloak closer about her and quicken her steps.

"Forgive me," he said; "I know I have no claim upon your friendship, your regard, but when I hear you talk of this happily-united circle I cannot overcome a painful regret for all I have lost in only now becoming acquainted with so much that is good. I have been a great deal alone,—that is to say, in thought and feeling; and I might almost say, if it were not presuming upon your kindness, that it is a certain selfish jealousy which I feel in realizing this confiding interchange of sympathies."

"In that case," responded Alide, with great composure, "I can promise you that all our family will extend their friendship and respect to whoever deserves and needs it."

He did not reply; but no silence ensued, for she grew more and more talkative in proportion as his reserve increased.

When they reached the vineyard they found that the thick shadows of the grape-leaves made it too dark for them to enter, and Madame Duroc pro-

posed that they should return at once to the house. Then followed a simple incident, now familiar to the world as the memorable events of history. It is but just to say that Steck at the time did not analyze the tender, sincere emotion which it excited in his breast; but in his artist-mind everything photographed itself with such distinctness that almost a lifetime later it recurred to him, and he transferred it to his Homeric page in the exquisite lines which all of us know. There were some large stones, roughly hewn to serve as steps, at the entrance of the vineyard, and they were descending these, when Alide's foot slipped, and she fell in his arms. For a second he supported her, with her hair close to his lips, her trembling form palpitating in his grasp.

She gently sank on his shoulder,
Breast was placed against breast, and cheek against cheek; thus
he stood there,
Fixed as a marble statue, the force of will keeping him steadfast,
Drew her not to him more closely, but braced himself under her
pressure.

She recovered herself almost immediately, and, suffused with shame at her awkwardness, as she expressed it, she hurried forward by his side.

Rahel and Max were already in the porch with the pastor when they arrived. "Did you find it as pleasant as we did?" asked Rahel. "You must have loitered by the way, for we walked as far as the old pear-tree, and yet we are home first."

"It is a rarely beautiful night," answered her mother. "But come, girls, it is time to go in now; and, Otto, I am sure the gentlemen are quite ready, after their journey from Strasburg to-day, to be shown to their room."

"I congratulate you, Dr. Steck," said Max Waldstein, when Otto had bidden the two young men good-night and closed the door of the guest-chamber, "on the result of these serious studies of yours; on your triumphant success in the praiseworthy attempt to examine these pastoral, idyllic lives with entire freedom from personal emotions. Wine, women, and song? Luther was an infant when he wrote it: it is philosophy, mathematics, jurisprudence, that make the world go round. What do you say, Dr. Steck? Have you brought your Phædon in your valise, and shall I fetch it to lull you to sleep? Tell me, am I not an admirable fellow to have introduced you into the original Primrose family?"

"Do not be hard upon me, Max," answered the other, frankly; "I acknowledge myself vanquished, routed, cut to pieces. But no, I will not yield like a craven; it is not open warfare, it is an ambuscade. Instead of warning me of the danger, you lured me into it. It was Rahel who was bewitching, Rahel who was irresistible; and just as I am pluming myself that I have met the enemy, received the full shock of her charge, and come off conqueror, there enters this baby whom you never

thought it worth your while to mention, and before she has spoken I am groveling in the dust."

"And it is only your own villainous taste that brought you there," replied Max. "How could I know that you would prefer one of these pink-and-white lasses that spring up as thick as weeds all over Germany, to the sprightly Mademoiselle Rahel, or Olivia, as you have dubbed her? Truly the story is quite complete: the gentleman in disguise may have the honor of passing for Mr. Burchell; and, since scoundrels are not so necessary in common life as in novels, I will undertake the rôle of the nephew, and behave myself better than he did."

"Oh, Max!" interrupted his companion, "tell me, above all things, on your conscience, have you not betrayed me? What can she think of me? What a cursed fool I have made of myself in this execrable costume! Does she know that I am Goethe? I heard you talking freely about me before supper."

"How the deuce could she know it, when she was out in the porch cooing to you the only time your name passed my lips?"

"But her dignified mother, her kind old father," said Goethe, anxiously,—“have you betrayed me to them? Do they know what a simpleton I have been?"

"I cannot answer for that," responded Waldstein, dryly; "but if they know you are a simpleton they have discovered it through their own mother-wit,

for I assure you, comrade, it is not I who would betray you."

"How did you happen to speak of me at all?" asked Goethe.

"Naturally enough," replied Max: "they questioned me about Strasburg, and I found your mad-cap fame had preceded you as far as Sesenheim. They had heard all sorts of preposterous stuff, and they were just begging me to tell them something about your eccentricities, when you came in with your sweetheart on your arm,—oh, no, I beg your pardon, not the Cathedral, but some heroine of a novel whom you were loftily studying for your first work of fiction."

Goethe made no reply, but paced the floor in an excited manner. Max watched him narrowly with an amused expression, and waited for him to resume the conversation. Finally he stopped, and broke out abruptly, "Is she engaged?"

"No," said Max, shortly.

"Hm! that is a relief," said Goethe, with a sigh. "Is she in love? has she ever been in love?"

"Really, Wolfgang," cried Max, laughing, "I cannot pretend to be familiar with such a mysterious thing as the heart of a woman. As to her being in love now, however, I think I can safely answer—no, unless she was smitten this evening by that pretty gray suit of yours. And for the past,—well, as she is scarcely more than a child, I hardly think

it possible that she should have had any serious passion hitherto."

"Strange! strange!" murmured Goethe, absently. "Such a cheerfulness by nature is inconceivable to me. Had she loved and lost and recovered herself, or were she now betrothed, in either case I could account for this deep, earnest serenity." And he relapsed into silence.

"Those two cousins of hers," he began, in a little while, "her aunt Catherine—no, that is not the name—her aunt Christiane's sons: has she not a sentiment for one of them?"

"For both of them, for all I know," answered Max; "but if you could see them, I hardly believe you would suspect it. I think the Durocs have monopolized the beauty of the family. And, besides, one of these cousins is some few months younger than herself, and therefore in her womanly eyes a mere child; the other is already married. Any more catechism to-night, Wolfgang?"

"Yes; who is Goetz?" asked Goethe, with great eagerness.

Max burst into a laugh. "Oh, I forgot Goetz," he cried. "There I acknowledge you have a rival, and a formidable one, too. Why, I have seen your modest, demure Fräulein Alide fling her arms about his neck and caress his black, curly head as though he were a good-looking fellow like one of us. And yet he has beauties of his own, too,—to say nothing of his moral qualities,—a world of

courage, a keen scent——” A light broke upon Goethe’s face, and he could not repress a smile himself. “Yes,” said Waldstein, “you are a rather presumptuous lad,—you have not been in the family a dozen hours, and you are jealous of the house-dog! But come, this may be very interesting for you, but I am tired and quite ready for sleep. I advise you to break off that walk of yours, and exercise your limbs in the morning. It is past midnight; and who knows but that I have my dreams to be dreamed out as well as you?”

A few moments later, honest Max was asleep as his head touched the pillow; but Goethe tossed feverishly about, and it was not till a short time before dawn that he succeeded in calming sufficiently his turbulent imagination to snatch a troubled slumber.

CHAPTER V.

GOETHE.

WITH the earliest beams of morning Goethe awoke. "Alide" was his first thought, and he sprang from his bed and began hastily to dress himself, that he might go into the open air and see her in the broad, dewy light of the young day. But now he was indeed horrified at the absurd wardrobe which he had so wantonly selected: the farther he advanced in his toilet, the meaner it seemed in his eyes, for everything had been calculated for just this effect. His hair could easily be managed; but when he forced himself into the shabby gray coat, and saw himself reflected in the little mirror piece by piece, first the short, thread-bare sleeves, then the ill-fitting jacket, and then the ridiculous breeches, he fell into despair. He looked at Waldstein's fine clothes as they hung over the chair, and gladly would he have carried them off and left his accursed husk behind, for Max was sufficiently good-humored to have put himself readily into his friend's costume, and so the tale would have found a merry ending early in the morning. But Waldstein was so much shorter

and stouter than himself that this attire would give him as ridiculous an appearance as his own. While he was standing with a perplexed, dejected countenance, summoning all his powers of invention, he heard a low, smothered laugh issuing from under the silken bed-quilt. He turned quickly and saw Max peering mischievously out upon him. "No, it is true," exclaimed Max, "you do look most cursedly!"

"And I know what I will do!" cried Goethe, impetuously. "Good-by, and make my excuses."

Waldstein sprang from the bed and tried to detain him. "Are you mad?" he called out. But it was too late, for his friend was already out of the door, down the stairs, out of the house and yard, and off to the tavern.

Now that he felt himself in safety, the cheerful sunlight and the cool breath of morning somewhat restored his quiet. He walked rapidly across the meadows to the Drusenheim inn, mounted his horse, which he had left there the evening before, and rode leisurely towards Strasburg, with the intention of changing his toilet, taking a fresh horse, and returning to the parsonage in time for dinner, or at the latest for dessert, and making his apologies and explanations. As he recalled the evening which he had spent with the Durocs, the pleasant incidents that had occurred, and the delicious emotions he had experienced, his vexation at his own

folly, and his impatience to see again the beloved face of Alide, grew wellnigh intolerable. He was just about to clap spurs into his steed and gallop into the city, when a sudden thought flashed upon him, and, turning the animal about, he rode back towards Drusenheim. He entered the court-yard of the tavern, and inquired for the landlord's son, whom he had remarked as a likely lad yesterday afternoon. Master Fritz, a well-made, good-looking youth, of somewhat the same figure and height as Goethe, soon made his appearance. In a few words Wolfgang proposed that the young man should exchange clothes with him, as he had something merry on foot at the parsonage.

"Capital!" cried Fritz; "you must be a good fellow, to make sport for the mam'selles; they are such excellent people, especially Mam'selle Alide; and the old folks, too, are fond of having everything go on pleasantly." He looked critically at Goethe's shabby costume, evidently taking him for a poor, enough starveling, but he was honest-hearted and amiable, and, besides, Wolfgang was to leave his good horse in the stable; so, without any ado, he consented to the bargain, adding, complacently, "If you wish to insinuate yourself, this is the right way."

Goethe soon stood smart enough in the courtyard, and his new friend looked with much satisfaction at the counterpart. "Topp! Mr. Brother," he cried, giving his hand, which Wolfgang grasped

heartily, "don't come too near my girl; she might make a mistake."

"Let me go in with you a moment," said Goethe, "that I may dress my hair like yours." "Since my intentions are enigmatical," he thought, "I will make myself an external riddle also." In a short time his soft brown locks were knotted jauntily on top, and with the help of a burnt cork his delicate arched eyebrows were thickened and darkened, and made to meet over his nose like those of the innkeeper's son. Then, taking the gayly-beribboned hat, he said, "Now, have you not something or other to be done at the parsonage, that I might announce myself there in a natural manner?"

"Good," said the lad; "but in that case you must wait a couple of hours yet. There is a woman confined at our house. I will offer to take the cake to the parson's wife, and you may carry it over. Pride must pay its penalty, and so must a joke."

His first device to beguile the tedious time was to order breakfast. He sat at the table familiarly with Fritz, and proposed to loiter an hour or so at the meal; but his exercise in the bracing air had added such zest to his appetite that when he had satisfied his hunger he found, to his surprise, but twenty minutes sped of his two hours' penance. Fritz suggested that Goethe, being an apt and amiable fellow, should go with him to the farm-

yard and stables and superintend the household arrangements for the day, and perhaps lend here and there a helping hand. Goethe was just the man to have interested himself deeply at any other moment in all the particulars of this active, healthy life, these varied duties, this genial, pleasant occupation which Fritz was to inherit and in which he already performed a large share of the work. Besides, the open-hearted peasant took the stranger into his confidence, and imparted various perplexities of his love-affairs, which just now were in rather an embarrassing condition. It was Lotte who held him to some foolish pledge of his boyhood, and it was Minna of the parsonage who possessed his heart. But Goethe was haunted by the vision of Alide, and burning with impatience to realize his dream: so he lent but an abstracted and unsympathetic ear to the prosy details of crops and marketings and tavern-profits, curiously interspersed with the idyllic complications of the peasant's personal history.

Meanwhile, at the parsonage, Alide also had risen betimes, and, as the events of the past evening recurred to her, her heart beat with unwonted excitement at the thought of meeting again this strange young man and penetrating his mystery. This searching daylight, she said to herself, would reveal all; it was only the dimness of lamplight and moonlight that had made her fancy such sudden, subtle changes in his countenance. Yet it

was not his appearance only that had altered. How thoroughly self-possessed she found him when she had advanced, in compassion for his embarrassment, to ask him to touch the harpsichord! And what did Herr Waldstein mean by interrupting that burst of eloquence at the supper-table? Never before had she heard a man talk like that; she could not raise her eyes while he spoke. Ah! had she seen him at such a moment, she would have divined who and what he was. When she did look, it was too late; the curtain had been again drawn.

Hitherto, when she had been in doubt about a stranger, she had never failed to appeal to her mother's decision, with unquestioning faith in the infallibility of that wise, deliberate judgment. Now, however, she did not dream of turning to any one for counsel; no one suspected the hidden treasure of which she had caught a glimpse. Her mother seemed grave, and even displeased, when Dr. Steck had spoken so eloquently at the table, and Rahel had no eyes for any one else while Max was with her. She would discover everything for herself, and then present to them all her prince in disguise, and he should know that never for an instant had she been deceived by the shabby surface.

She looked more like a child than yesterday, as she sprang down-stairs into the open air, for she had left her plaited hair hanging down her back, and replaced her coronet of braids with a snood of

pale-blue ribbon. But the serious eyes held something more suggestive of the perfect flowering of maidenhood than any light they possessed before they had fallen upon Goethe's face.

The family were just seating themselves at the breakfast-table when the door opened, and Alide, who had glanced up eagerly, saw, with a chill of disappointment, Herr Waldstein enter alone. Before the pastor could inquire about his new guest, Max said, with some constraint, "My friend begs me to tell you all, with a great many apologies for his apparent rudeness, and many more thanks for your kindness to him, that he has been obliged to return in haste to Strasburg."

"I am sorry for that," said the pastor; "I flatter myself that I can judge character pretty accurately, and that youth pleased me amazingly: he was a fine, ingenuous fellow. Well, I doubt not but he will turn up again."

"Oh, you may be sure of that!" said Max, who could not refrain from a furtive glance at Alide. "He was delighted with his evening here, and he pulled a wry face at having to return to the city."

"It seems strange that he was obliged to leave so suddenly," said Madame Duroc: "he certainly could not have received news from town so early."

"No, madame," stammered Max; "but last night—no, not last night—in fact, though he is a good fellow, to tell you the truth, he is something of a madcap. Indeed, he is only a boy in years,

and he rode over here for a holiday, without remembering an important business engagement for this morning in town. I am quite sure he will return soon and make you his own excuses."

No further attention was paid to the freak so naturally accounted for, while the family conversation flowed on in its ordinary channels. How intolerably flat it was to poor Alide! Her little romance was shattered to bits by this unexpected incident; she was sure he would never come back. Now, more than ever, he was a prince in disguise, and, since he had been with her the greater part of the evening, the modest girl accused herself of a thousand blunders that must have driven him away. How she had bored him with her foolish confidences about her dull village circle! how ungainly he must have found her rustic appearance and manner! She choked a sigh, and tried to interest herself again in the trivial events of her home-life. After breakfast Rahel proposed a walk, and the two sisters fetched their hats and strolled with Waldstein across the meadows. Alide almost forgot to be melancholy in the sunshine of the autumn fields. Ah, how easily at this early period could she have succeeded in what seemed to her the heroic endeavor to banish all recollection of the wonderful stranger! She called Goetz from his kennel, and in a little while she was bounding with the dog, laughing and singing, far ahead of Max and Rahel, or gayly chatting alongside of them.

There are women who especially please us in a room ; others who look better in the open air. Alide belonged to the latter. Her whole nature, her form, never appeared more charming than when she moved along an elevated footpath. The grace of her deportment seemed to vie with the flowery earth, and the indestructible cheerfulness of her countenance with the blue sky. In walks she floated about, an animating spirit, and knew how to supply the gaps which might arise here and there. The lightness of her movements we have already commended, and she was most graceful when she ran. As the deer seems just to fulfil its destination when it lightly flies over the sprouting corn, so did her peculiar nature seem most plainly to express itself when she ran with light steps over mead and furrow, to seek something which had been lost, to summon a distant couple, or to order something necessary. On these occasions she was never out of breath, and always kept her equilibrium.

“Who is this coming towards us with a white thing in his hands?” asked Max.

“Oh, that is Fritz, the innkeeper’s son,” said Rahel, drawing her eyelids together coquettishly. “But what can he be running across the meadows with?”

As he drew near, Alide called out, “Fritz, what are you bringing there?”

He took off his hat in such a manner that it

entirely concealed his face, and, without speaking, held up a loaded napkin high in the air.

"A christening-cake!" cried Alide. "How is your sister?"

"Well," replied he, shortly.

"Carry it to the house," said Rahel. "If you do not find my mother, give it to the maid. But wait for us; we shall soon be back. Do you hear? That will give him a chance with Minna," she added, kindly, as they continued their walk.

With a joyous feeling of hope, Goethe in his new disguise hastened along the path, and soon reached the parsonage. He found nobody either in the house or the kitchen, and, taking it for granted that the pastor was engaged in the study, he seated himself on a bench in the porch, with his cake beside him, and pressed down his hat over his brows. It was indeed a delightful sensation which he now experienced; to sit again on this threshold over which a short time before he had blundered out in despair, to have seen her already again, to have heard again her dear voice so soon after his chagrin had pictured to him a long separation, and every moment to be expecting herself and a discovery at which his heart throbbed, and yet a discovery without shame, for surely love never prompted a merrier prank.

But the maid came stepping out of the barn. "Did the cakes turn out well?" cried she. "And how is your sister?"

"All right," replied Goethe, and pointed to the cake without looking up.

She raised the napkin and muttered, "Now, what's the matter with you to-day again? Has Lotte been looking at somebody else? Don't let us suffer for that; you will make a happy couple if you carry on so."

As she spoke rather loud, the pastor came to the window and asked what was the matter. She showed him the supposed Fritz, who rose and turned towards him, but kept the hat well over his face.

"Good-morning, Fritz," said the pastor; "I am glad to hear you say your sister is getting along nicely. You may go round to the kitchen and say a word to Minna."

With these friendly words the pastor turned into the room again, and Goethe was moving towards the garden, when he heard the voice of Madame Duroc, who was just entering the court-yard, calling him. He was obliged to meet her with the sun shining full in his face, but he still availed himself of the advantage which his hat afforded him, and greeted her by scraping a leg.

"How are you, Fritz?" said she, kindly. "Go to the kitchen, and be sure not to return home without taking some breakfast." And she re-entered the house.

Goethe walked up and down the garden, congratulating himself on his unexpected luck, and

breathing hard at the thought that he should so soon see again the young people. Lost in his reflections, he did not hear a step approach, and, raising his head suddenly, he found Madame Duroc directly in front of him. "Fritz," she began, and then, for the first time looking him full in the face, the words died away upon her lips. He saw that it was useless to try to conceal himself any longer, and, doffing his hat, he stood before her in the sunshine, with his eyes cast to the ground and his face covered with blushes.

After a pause she exclaimed, with displeasure, "I am looking for Fritz, and whom do I find? Is it you, young sir? How many forms have you, then?"

He raised his eyes and looked at her so honestly and respectfully that her anger was appeased. "In earnest, only one," he replied, gravely; and then added, with a merry smile, "but in sport, as many as you like."

"Which sport I will not spoil," said she, graciously, smiling in her turn. "Go out behind the garden into the meadow until it strikes twelve, then come back, and I shall already have contrived the joke."

He obeyed, and, after passing beyond the hedges of the village gardens, he was embarrassed by seeing some country-people advancing towards him along the footpath. By his side was a hill crowned by a small wood, and, springing up the elevation, he plunged into the grove, in order to conceal him-

self till the appointed time. He found himself at once in a little sylvan paradise. The soft turf was mottled with broken sunlight and strewn with the first fall of leaves; patches of the deep-blue sky were shining between the restless foliage and waving branches, and on every side a heaven-bright picture, set in a bushy frame, opened before him. Below, was the lively village, and at no great distance, as seen from this point, stood the gray parsonage, embosomed in its prosperous fields. Beyond, lay Drusenheim, with its old-fashioned inn, and its glittering tiled roof that caught the sunlight, while far away rose into sight the steeple of Strasburg Minster. He could catch between the trees a glimpse of the flowing shimmer of the Rhine, and could distinguish in the hazy distance, its woody islands, with their magical tints of yellow and russet and green. In the opposite direction waved the noble outlines of the Vosges, their purple hollows and dazzling light-green pasture-slopes streaked with shifting shadows.

It was evident that he had not been the first to appreciate this rare combination of lovely vistas, for benches had been placed around, so that one could admire at leisure from every point. Seating himself upon one of these, under a tall elm, he saw fastened on the trunk an oblong little board with the inscription, "Alide's Rest." His heart beat violently at the sudden recollection. A light foot-step startled him from his reverie, and, looking

around, he saw Alide, who, aglow with youth and beauty, "most highly realized his fair dream."

"Why, Fritz, what are you doing here?" she cried, from below the hill.

"Not Fritz," exclaimed Goethe, running to meet her, "but one who craves forgiveness of you a thousand times."

She looked at him in wonder, almost in alarm, and fetched her breath quickly; but, endeavoring to conceal her emotion with a laugh, she said, "You wicked man! how you frighten me!"

"The first disguise has led me into the second," cried he; "the former would have been unpardonable had I but known, in any degree, to whom I was coming. But this one you will certainly forgive, for it is the shape of persons whom you treat so kindly."

She colored deeply, but walked up the hill with him, and answered, "At any rate, you will not fare worse than Fritz. Let us sit down; for I confess the fright has gone into my limbs."

Goethe was even more agitated than herself as they entered the grove and took their seats. So many conventional necessities come to the aid of a woman that Alide, whose heart was thrilled with joy at finding him thus again, was able to speak with perfect composure. "We know everything already, up to this morning, from your friend," said she; "now do you tell us the rest."

"What! you know that I am Goethe, and you

pardon my boldness, my presumption, in deceiving you as I did! But you cannot imagine my horror this morning in thinking that I must again appear before you in such a guise as to excite nothing but ridicule and disgust. I thought of all your genial household, but above all, one face was always before me, hospitable, gentle, even as it is now, but with that terrible smile lurking behind it. Then Max, who was watching me, broke out into a laugh. It was too much. I rushed from the house in despair, to Strasburg, as I intended; but the happy idea occurred to me that I might borrow something presentable of Fritz,—anything to appear human in your sight, to throw myself at your feet and implore your forgiveness for my folly.”

She laughed low and graciously at his vehemence, and answered, good-humoredly, “How can I help forgiving one who has suffered so grievously?”

“Ah, mademoiselle,” he went on, with his eyes fixed upon the ground, “it seems a light thing to suffer in that way, I know; but it is something deeper than vanity that is wounded when one makes a false step in entering a home like yours. My first glance at you, as you stood under the doorway, told me, There is a woman whose friendship, whose affection, would be worth a lifetime to win. And before I had spoken I had forfeited them forever.” He paused, not daring to look her in the face.

"Surely," said she, in her even quiet tones, "the friendship of a woman who would attach a serious construction to so harmless a joke would scarcely be worth striving for."

He looked up with joyful assurance. "Then you forgive me!" he cried. "Ah, you are too generous! But I knew you were like that. Last night, when you sang for me in the porch, when we walked together in that heavenly moonlight, I could find no words to offer you. What could you have thought of me, as I stood dull and taciturn by your side? But no, *Fräulein Alide*, surely you guessed what was passing within me. And now that you know who I am, I feel as if I must give vent in speech to this great emotion. I must thank you for your incredible goodness to me. Again and again I must ask you to forgive me the alarm I have caused you."

She made no answer, and he took her hand and imprinted a kiss upon its dainty whiteness. She did not withdraw it, but suffered it to remain in his. "And to think," said he, "that this morning I fancied myself eternally separated from you! How little do we repose upon the inexhaustible beneficence of the gods! Now I sit by your side, I look into your eyes, I press to my lips your dear hand,—and an hour ago there was a gulf between us. What does this mean, save that they will bless us, they in whose guidance and support, like little children, we confide?" And he bowed

his stately head with simple reverence as he spoke.

It would have been impossible to doubt the sincerity of that appeal. This was not as her father spoke of Heaven, but Alide felt none the less that the words came from the young man's inmost heart. While he talked, he did not seem to have remarked how meditative and silent she had become. She looked at him while his glance was bent away from her, and a sudden glow overspread her face, and her eyes rested upon him with such wonderful tenderness that he might have fancied their liquid depths were filling with tears. He raised his head abruptly, and, noting her agitation, he threw aside his grave air, and once more impetuously craved her pardon.

"Alide! Alide!" It was the voice of her sister calling her. Immediately she recovered her composure, together with her perfect cheerfulness. "That will be a pretty story," said she. "She is coming hither on my side." And she bent forward so as half to conceal Goethe. "Turn yourself away, so that you may not be recognized at once."

As he did so, Rahel and Waldstein entered the grove, and both stood still as if petrified.

"What is this? what is this?" cried Rahel, with the rapidity of one who is frightened. "You hand in hand with Fritz,—how am I to understand this?"

"Dear sister," said Alide, "the poor fellow is begging something of me, and he has something

to beg of you too; but you must forgive him beforehand."

"I do not understand," said her sister, shaking her head and looking at Max, who stood by and contemplated the scene without any kind of expression.

Alide arose and drew Goethe after her. "No hesitating," cried she,—“pardon begged and granted.”

"Now do," said he, stepping near Rahel. "I have need of pardon."

She drew back, gave a loud shriek, and was covered with blushes. She then threw herself down on the grass and laughed immoderately. Waldstein smiled, and exclaimed, "You are a rare youth!" and he shook Goethe's hand. He was not usually liberal of his caresses, and his shake of the hand was hearty and cordial.

Rahel arose, and they all set out on their return to the parsonage. Mutual explanations ensued, and Goethe learned that Alide had only parted from the promenaders in order to rest in her little nook for a moment before dinner; and when the others returned to the house, the mother had sent them to call her, for dinner was ready.

"This is, indeed too delightful!" cried Rahel, wiping the tears of laughter from her eyes. "So mamma has discovered the secret, you say. Now we have still to deceive papa, and Otto, and Minna, and Hans."

Amid a great deal of merriment, they mystified

the servant-man and the maid; and all four in high spirits entered the dining-room. The table was covered, and the pastor was already waiting in the room. Rahel paused on the threshold and called out, "Papa, have you any objection to Fritz dining with us to-day? But you must let him keep his hat on."

"With all my heart," said the old man. "But why such an unusual thing? has he hurt himself?"

"No," replied Rahel, leading Goethe forward, "but he has a bird-cage under it, and the birds will fly out and make a terrible fuss, for they are nothing but wild ones." So saying, she pulled off Goethe's hat and bade him make his curtsy.

The pastor looked at him, but did not lose his priestly self-possession. "Ay, ay, Mr. Candidate!" he exclaimed, raising a threatening finger, "you have changed saddles very quickly, and in the night I have lost an assistant who yesterday promised me so faithfully that he would often mount my pulpit on week-days. Well, you are welcome in any guise." And they all seated themselves at the table.

During the meal Otto came in, and, slapping Goethe on the shoulder, said, "Good dinner to you, Fritz."

"Many thanks, squire," cried Goethe. The strange voice and the strange face startled him.

"What do you say," asked Rahel,— "does he not look like his brother?"

"Yes, from behind, like all folks," said Otto, who would not acknowledge himself surprised; and he did not look at Goethe again, but busied himself with zealously devouring the dishes to make up for lost time. At dessert the real Fritz came in; they began to banter him, but he was modest and clever enough, and in a half-confused manner mixed up himself, his sweetheart, his counterpart, and the mam'selles to such a degree that no one could tell about whom he was talking, and they were only too glad to let him consume in peace a glass of wine and a bit of his own cake.

After dinner the young people assembled in the porch to decide how best to take advantage of the serene afternoon. Their spirits were subdued by a deep and tranquil happiness, and only quiet amusements were proposed. A walk was objected to, as it would have been awkward for Goethe to meet any of the neighboring country-folk in his borrowed clothes, and finally Max suggested that as Wolfgang was the obstacle to their ordinary pastimes, the entertainment of the company should devolve upon him.

"The fellow has any quantity of rhymes and fairy-tales in his valise," said Waldstein, "and he can fetch some of them now and read to us in the open air. What is the use of having a poet among us if we must divert ourselves in as commonplace a way as other people?"

The proposition was hailed with delight, and

Goethe was dispatched to his room for his manuscripts. "How I wish all the family could enjoy such a treat!" said Rahel; "but what is the use of calling them? I know papa has gone for his nap, and mamma is always busy. Where shall we go for our entertainment?"

"Why not to Fräulein Alide's 'Rest'?" asked Goethe, who had rejoined them.

"No," said Alide, hurriedly, "that is too far; we will go into the summer-house by the orchard."

"Excellent!" cried Max; "that is the very place. Wolf must pose as a mediæval minnesinger, improvising his verses amidst beautiful damsels in the open air."

"No," modestly replied Goethe, with a laugh; "no more *poscs* for me. After my misadventure yesterday, I am content to be simply Wolfgang Goethe with these young ladies,—neither meister-singer, nor doctor, nor peasant,—and if I can but redeem that name in their sight I shall be grateful. Besides, I am not going to inflict any rhymes upon you; it will be plain prose, and no very lofty flight of imagination, either."

They took their seats in the arbor, with the sunlight flickering down on them through the red vine-leaves; Goethe in the centre, and Alide directly in front of him, with her chin resting on her hand, reflecting in her upturned face the inspiration and excitement of the countenance upon which her eyes were riveted. Rahel busied her restless

fingers with a piece of scarlet needlework, and Max as usual took a low seat near her feet, whence he could admire the little downcast chestnut head. For more than two hours the young magician held his circle enchanted, not so much by the charm of the story, though that also exercised a powerful attraction, as by the masterly modulations of his voice, the grace of his unstudied attitude and occasional gestures, the infinite play of expression upon his face,—in a word, by the irresistible influence of his personality.

He succeeded in awakening curiosity, in fixing the attention, in provoking over-hasty solutions of impenetrable riddles, in deceiving expectations, in confusing by the more wonderful which came into the place of the wonderful, in arousing sympathy and fear, in causing anxiety, in moving, and at last, by the change of what was apparently earnest into an ingenious and cheerful jest, in satisfying, the mind, and leaving the imagination materials for new images, and the understanding, materials for further reflection.

When it was over, there was a short pause. Then Max broke out, "Bravo, bravo! it is beyond expectation!"

"How singular, how wonderful, it is!" echoed Rahel. "But you must let us have a copy of it, that we may read it often among ourselves and show it to our friends."

"To think that it is over now!" said Alide,

wistfully, with a little sigh. "Yes, Herr Goethe, you will promise what my sister asks, will you not? It is not very long, and I am sure you could easily make a fair copy of the whole, and leave it with us as a memento of this happy afternoon."

"Most willingly," replied Goethe; "I will bring it to you from the city as soon as I can transcribe it. But such a day as this has been for me should indeed, as you say, leave something substantial in our possession. Have I compensated sufficiently as Goethe for the follies of Dr. Steck, to ask something from you, Fräulein Alide?"

"Is it in my power to grant?" asked she.

"It is the rose in your hair."

"Oh, is that all?" said she, simply. "I had forgotten it was there,—it can scarcely be fresh now." And she untwisted the stem of the white flower from her snood and threw it playfully into his hands.

"The day has already come to a close for us," said Waldstein, with a significant glance at his friend. "You know, Wolfgang, I must be back in Strasburg to-morrow morning."

"Well, then, our holiday is over," assented Goethe, with a sigh. "We will go to the house and take leave of all our kind entertainers."

As they were returning to the parsonage, he found occasion to whisper to Alide, "Your wonderful goodness to me prompts me to one question

more: May I interpret as I please your generosity about the rose?"

"It means only one thing," said Alide, in a tremulous and almost inaudible voice, while her face grew deadly pale, and she laid her hand upon his arm. He seized it in his own, and kissed it passionately without speaking.

Two hours later, he and his friend, after a silent walk across the meadows, entered their quarters for the night, at the Drusenheim inn.

CHAPTER VI.

FIRST LOVE.

FAR different had it been from the sunny stroll which they had enjoyed the previous day. The seemingly harmless clouds that had overhung the mountains since morning had now accumulated in threatening masses, and rolled in huge gray vapors over all the heavens. A wet, penetrating mist overspread the earth, and a chill wind that smelt already of the rain blew drearily, now and then shaking down showers of condensed moisture from the faded trees. As the two friends advanced, night came on so suddenly that more than once they strayed from the path and were obliged to retrace their footsteps. Goethe felt a grapple at his heart which led his thoughts incessantly backward. At the last moment, when he was taking leave in the porch, Alide had been sent by her father to fetch the plans for the rebuilding of the manse, which Goethe had offered to take with him to Strasburg.

"I am glad you are not going as far as the city to-night," said Rahel, looking up at the clouds: "what a gloomy ending for such a bright day!"

"And yet," replied Goethe, "I shall always think of the parsonage as an enchanted castle associated with perpetual sunshine."

"Well, if the storm should overtake you," answered Rahel, laughing, "my sister and myself will be the powerful princesses to protect you till you get beyond our dominions. Will we not, Alide?" And she turned to her sister, who reappeared with the scroll.

"That we will," said Alide, with spirit; "and here is my talisman to shield you from the dangers of the road."

When he looked back at her, he saw her smiling still upon him, until her fresh rose-face and white-clad form were lost in the folds of mist, and she vanished as weirdly and gradually as a spirit maiden.

"Well, I am not sorry to get under shelter after the infernal cold darkness of this night," cried Max, as they entered their room at the inn.

"We are fortunate to have escaped a storm," replied Goethe, and relapsed into silence.

"It is strange," resumed Waldstein, "that you should have hit upon that story to read to the girls. Did you not notice what a peculiar impression it made?"

"How do you mean? I could not help observing that the elder laughed more than was appropriate at certain passages, that Fräulein Alide shook her head, that you all looked significantly

at each other, and you yourself were nearly put out of countenance. I do not deny that I almost felt embarrassed myself, for it struck me that it was perhaps improper to tell the dear girls a parcel of stuff of which they had better been ignorant, and to give them such a bad opinion of the male sex as they must have formed from the principal character."

"You have not hit it at all," said Max. "The 'dear girls' are not so unacquainted with such matters as you imagine, for the society around them gives occasion for many reflections; and there happens to be on the other side of the Rhine exactly such a couple as you describe, allowing a little for fancy and exaggeration; the husband just so tall and sturdy and heavy, the wife so pretty and dainty that he could easily hold her in his hand. Their mutual position in other respects, their history altogether, so exactly accords with your tale, that the girls seriously asked me whether you knew the persons and described them in jest. I assured them you did not; and if you follow my advice you will let the story remain uncopied. With the assistance of delays and pretexts you may easily find an excuse."

It was only this night that Alide experienced the vague trouble of a new passion. The ominous threats of a storm, so unexpected after the resplendent brightness of the day, the wild, melancholy howling of the rising wind, added to the turmoil

of her own breast, held her eyes from sleep during the long, slow hours ; and, though she could assign no cause, at intervals great tears would slowly gather under her lids and trickle down her cheeks. When she recalled her own avowal to Goethe, she felt her whole frame tremble and the blood mount to her face in the darkness. Just as she was about to soothe herself to sleep with the sweet thought that she loved and was beloved by one who was worthy, the storm broke without. The rain streamed in floods on roof and pane and gable, and startled her into hopeless wakefulness. She rose and looked out into the blurred blackness of the night, while a thousand fantastic terrors possessed her brain. The simple girl clasped her hands together, and, kneeling by her bedside, implored the blessing and protection of Heaven upon this stranger so suddenly endeared to her. This solemn communion finally succeeded in quieting her, and she was able to gain a few hours of profound and dreamless repose.

When she awoke, the clear sunlight was slanting through the lattice ; she could catch glimpses without of the brightness of the rain-washed blue and green. Her heart was uplifted within her by the inspiring sight. How shadowy, how childish, seemed all the distorted fears of the night before this dazzling reality ! Goethe's words came back to her : "how little do we repose in the inexhaustible beneficence of the gods !" and from that moment a

sense of perfect peace took entire possession of her. All day it was as though she walked upon the clouds; the earth seemed elastic beneath her footsteps; the air was a palpable tissue of color and radiance; the heavens were filled with saints and angels, who watched over him with the same universal eyes with which they shed all blessed influences upon her. Her own thoughts sufficed her for perpetual delight: every moment she recalled another expression, another gesture, another word that she had remarked the previous day. She lived over and over those magical hours. The toss of his head, the music of his laughter, the characteristic movement of his hand over his brow, the trick of his voice, the glimpse which she had caught of tears in his eyes as she looked at him after her song in the porch, and reminiscences more sacred than these which she scarcely dared put in words even in her mind, set the poor child's head in a whirl of happiness from morning till night.

The next day brought her a letter; there was no need to tell her who had traced the bold and graceful characters of the superscription. It was Fritz who carried it to her from the inn, and she had much ado to conceal from him the extravagant delight which it occasioned her. She succeeded, however, in receiving it with composure, even lingering a moment to question him about his sister and her new baby. Then she walked quietly away with her treasure in her hand. When she felt herself out of his sight, she

paused with a fluttering heart to decide where she could enjoy it with the least danger of disturbance, and finally ran off in the direction of the little grove where she had found Goethe the morning after his arrival. She took her seat under the elm-tree, and for a few moments contented herself with gazing at her own name in these shapely Roman letters: "Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle Alide Duroc. The Parsonage, Sesenheim." She was in no haste to possess and secure her happiness; she liked to dally with it, that she might taste the sweetness of its every phase. At last she broke the seal, and read so slowly and deliberately that after a single reading she could have repeated it from beginning to end, for every word had burned itself upon her heart.

"STRASBURG, October 15, 1770.

"MY DEAR NEW FRIEND,—I dare to call you so, for if I can trust the language of eyes, then did mine in the first glance read the hope of this new friendship in yours,—and for our hearts I will answer. You, good and gentle as I know you, will you not show some favor to one who loves you so? Dear, dear friend, that I have something to say to you there can be no question, but it is quite another matter whether I exactly know wherefore I now write and *what* I may write. Thus much I am conscious of by a certain inward unrest, that I would gladly be by your side, and that a scrap of paper is as true a consolation and as winged a steed

for me here in noisy Strasburg as it can be to you in your quiet, if you truly feel the separation from your friend. The circumstances of our journey home you can easily imagine, if you marked my pain at parting, and how I longed to remain behind. Waldstein's thoughts went forward, mine backward; so you can understand how our conversation was neither interesting nor copious. At the end of the Wanzenu we thought to shorten our route, and found ourselves in the midst of a morass. Night came on, and we only needed the storm, which threatened to overtake us, to have had every reason for being fully convinced of the love and constancy of our princesses. Meanwhile, the scroll which I held constantly in my hand—fearful of losing it—was a talisman which charmed away all the perils of the journey. And now—oh, I dare not utter it!—either you can guess it, or you will not believe it! At last we arrived, and our first thought, which had been our joy on the road, was the project soon to see you again. How delicious a sensation is the hope of seeing again those we love! And we, when our coddled heart is a little sorrowful, at once bring it medicine, and say: Dear little heart, be quiet, you will not long be away from her you love; be quiet, dear little heart! Meanwhile we give it a chimera to play with, and then is it good and still as a child to whom the mother gives a doll, instead of the apple which it must not eat.

“You would not believe that the noisy gayety of Strasburg is disagreeable to me after the sweet country pleasures enjoyed with you. Never, mademoiselle, did Strasburg seem so empty to me as now. I hope, indeed, it will be better when the remembrance of those charming hours is a little dimmed,—when I no longer feel so vividly how good, how amiable, my friend is. Yet ought I to forget that, or to wish it? No, I will rather retain a little sorrow, and write to you frequently. And now many, many thanks and many sincere remembrances to your dear parents. To your dear sister, many hundred—what I would so willingly give you again.

J. W. G.”

When she closed it, with a simple gesture she raised it to her lips and kissed it tenderly; her face wore an expression of celestial calm, and for a moment she sat with dreamy eyes, motionless, like one in a trance. Then, rousing herself abruptly, and breaking forth into a song half music and half laughter, she ran down the hill and home to the parsonage, for a walk with Rahel or a romp with Goetz.

Every day this joy was repeated, and nearly every day with the letter came such unostentatious gifts as he dared send her. The girl grew singularly meek and gentle under the softening influence of her happiness. She was continually asking herself what she had done to merit such a beautiful des-

tiny, and her sole aim in his absence was to render herself in some degree worthy of his love.

Her parents could not find it in their hearts to endeavor to make her look with more circumspection at the total transformation of her life. Indeed, it was far from the honest pastor's wish to see her otherwise. The mother could not repress many a gloomy foreboding in reflecting upon the suddenness of the affection on either side, the youthfulness of both, the inexperience and simplicity of her daughter, and the premature worldly knowledge of the brilliant young man. But her husband had an answer for every objection.

"We must not forget, Kitty, in our zeal for our children's happiness, the feelings of our own youth. How much longer had I known you before we stole a march upon our elders? And, indeed, I cannot wonder at her fancy; I never saw myself a likelier lad. He has a better idea to-day of all that our house needs than Klug and Guédin together. Besides, though he did change his character the second day he was with us, I have not a doubt that he could fulfil his promise, and deliver a fair enough sermon for me on week-days."

"But it is not the assistance of a curate, Moritz, that you must put into the scale with our darling's happiness."

"Nay, wife; it is only as it influences my opinion of his abilities that I speak. And where could you find a more creditable match for her? His family

is among the most respectable in Frankfort, and Waldstein bears testimony enough to the soundness of his heart. No, Kitty, let things run their own course. It has ever been my opinion that we elders interfere something too much in these matters. We cannot make our bleared old vision serve for these young people,—we see much that they may be happily blind to all their lives, and I warrant they have a world of wonderful sights around them that is closed to us. It is a miracle that two young hearts should know each other at sight, and make each other's sunshine for a lifetime, and yet it is a miracle that often comes to pass; there is a wiser One than we who watches over all. And do you know, Kätchen, when I look at our baby Alide's face now, I feel as young myself as though I were once again wooing thee." And he smiled with tears in his eyes, and kissed his wife's forehead.

Many a time Alide tried to express to Goethe her joy and gratitude, but nothing that she wrote could satisfy her, and it was with many misgivings that she finally dispatched to him a letter. Even this, as soon as it was fairly off, she would have recalled had it been possible. She had not read it over, and had written it so rapidly that she had no recollection of a single word it contained. The next morning, however, all her fears were lost in the glad thought with which she awoke. "He receives it to-day! How near we are together! It is al-



most as if I could stretch out my hand and press his own there in Strasburg. Perhaps he will come to me when he has read it!" And all day this idea gained in strength upon her, until she had firmly convinced herself that she would see him before night. She even told her sister that Goethe would be with them that evening.

"Oh, I am so glad!" cried Rahel. "And the Stockmars and the Hellers coming to-morrow! But how do you know? Will Max be with him?"

"One question at a time," said Alide, gently, who was a little startled out of her visionary faith by her sister's eagerness. "I cannot answer for Max, and Herr Goethe has not told me he would come; but I think he will be here."

"Oh, pshaw!" said Rahel. "It is one of your ridiculous fancies, Alide. I do not believe a word of it."

CHAPTER VII.

IN STRASBURG.

NEVER before had Goethe found his varied occupations in the city so wearisome as when he resumed them after his brief holiday at the parsonage. Not long before, he had written to a friend that "for the first time he knew what it was to be happy without his heart being engaged. Pleasant people and manifold studies left him no time for feeling. His life was like a sledge-journey, splendid and sounding, but with just as little for the heart as it had much for eyes and ears." But now all was different; he had none of his previous animation to impart to anything that he attempted. Perhaps had he been able to remain by Alide's side, the fancy so suddenly enkindled would have burnt itself out; but now that he was separated from her, it developed into an absorbing passion which deprived him of all spirit for his ordinary pursuits. Her every charm was infinitely magnified by distance and by the most powerful of imaginations. He found himself forever contrasting the tedium of this enforced absence with the blissful consciousness of life and youth, and "that highest grace of

love," which he had known in her presence. He was obliged to renounce his sketching, for it gave his mind too much scope to lose itself in idle reverie as he sat listlessly before his canvas. At any other period of his life, his restlessness, his longing, his depression, and his feverish excitement would have found their surest and safest vent in composition,—in the production of those inimitable songs, each one of which has crystallized a subtle, and what had hitherto appeared an indescribable, condition or emotion of the heart. But just now he had become the disciple of the cynical Herder, who "had so spoiled his hopes and fancies respecting himself that he began to doubt his own capabilities." This master "had torn down the curtain which concealed from Goethe the poverty of German literature, and had ruthlessly destroyed many of his prejudices; in the sky of his fatherland were but few stars of importance left, and the rest he was now taught to regard as so many transient candle-snuffs." Thus there was nothing left him but to pursue with diligence his serious studies. He devoted himself to jurisprudence as assiduously as was required to take his degree with credit, and he was able finally to interest himself in medicine, because it "disclosed glimpses of Nature, if it did not reveal her on every side." Moreover, he was attached to this science by intercourse and habit.

His appearance changed as conspicuously as his

feelings. No one would have recognized this pale, moping youth, as he pored over his books or roused himself to attend a medical lecture or to study every form of disease in the city hospitals, as the wild, buoyant lad who had illustrated with his inspiring presence and his inexhaustible gifts a day of sunshine at the Duroc parsonage. In society he became so reserved and indifferent that he acquired the nicknames of the "wolf" and the "bear." It was no feeble sentiment that such a man could entertain, for he threw the whole force of his passionate nature into all that attracted and possessed him. He was literally consumed by this hidden fire. One consolation indeed was his,—he could write to her daily, and he could transport himself in imagination to her presence while thus holding communication with her, or even while studying the sketches for the alteration of her home. He busied himself with a thousand plans for the improvement and embellishment of that beloved dwelling, with a thousand fantastic decorations for her own room, and meantime he sent her constantly a new book, a curious ornament, a rare engraving with which to adorn it when all was completed.

Once, and once only, did he receive a letter from her. He had never seen her handwriting, and, coming as it did with half a dozen letters from his family, the modest little missive was thrown carelessly aside until he had read all the details of his

home in Frankfort. Then he took it up, vaguely wondering whence it could have come ; but he had no sooner broken the seal than the blood rushed into his face, and with a little cry of joy he pressed it to his lips, and read it over and over long after he could repeat it by heart.

“My dear Herr Goethe,” wrote Alide, “I have tried many times to write you my thanks for all your goodness to me, for the precious tokens of your affectionate remembrance which you have so constantly sent me, since that happy day, now nearly a month ago, that you passed with us. But everything looks so cold, almost curt, on paper, that I have not dared to send you such poor scraps as I have written. Now, however, I will not let you any longer think me so ungrateful, and I will not read my letter over, so that I may find courage to send it. Besides, when I remember how indulgent you are to me, how you seem to see clearly only that which is genuine in one’s heart, I am greatly reassured. Indeed, you are already more like an old friend than many with whom I have been all my life familiar. Do you know, Herr Goethe, that ever since that day I have been as happy as one in a dream? In the morning I awake with a light heart, and think, ‘What, then, do I possess which I never knew before?’ and then with a great rush of joy it all comes upon me, and with it the hopeful feeling that I shall see you soon again. I do not grow impatient,—it seems to me that I could wait

for centuries, knowing that in the end my friend will surely come. Formerly I was hasty, petulant, sometimes even rude; but now nothing vexes me, nothing can come between me and this wonderful new happiness. But I did not mean to write so much when I began. I only wished to thank you for all your gifts, especially the 'Book of Songs,' and, above all, your letters. I must not write again; but do not think of me as sad or impatient, or any other than the happiest girl in the world.

ALIDE DUROC."

"November 5, 1770."

This cheerful letter imparted somewhat of its own joyousness to Goethe. All day the words kept ringing in his ears with the sweet persistence of some familiar melody. In the afternoon he went, according to his custom, to the hospital, and with his respected instructor visited bed after bed. His original disgust at the invalids had gradually subsided, for he had learned to regard their various conditions as abstract ideas, through which recovery and the restoration of the human form and nature appeared possible. It was a singular anomaly for so young a man, and especially one of his reputation, to devote himself so earnestly to such a subject as this. To-day he seemed unusually pale and excited, and there was a strange longing expression in his bright eyes. The professor could not help regarding him with peculiar interest; he did not conclude his lecture, as he was in the habit

of doing, with some doctrine that might have reference to some particular case of illness, but said, cheerfully, "Gentlemen, there are some holidays before us; make use of them to enliven your spirits. Studies must not only be pursued with seriousness and diligence, but also with cheerfulness and freedom of mind. Give movement to your bodies, and traverse the beautiful country on horse and foot. He who is at home will take delight in that to which he has been accustomed, while for the stranger there will be new impressions and pleasant reminiscences for the future."

Goethe thought he heard a voice from heaven. He knew very well that the admonition was principally intended for himself, and he could have embraced with gratitude his worthy old friend. He made all the haste he could to order a horse and dress himself for his visit. He sent for Max, who was nowhere to be found; but this did not detain him. However, the necessary preparations went on slowly, and he could not depart so soon as he wished. Fast as he rode, darkness overtook him. It was a wild, windy night; only at intervals would the clear round face of the moon break forth in transparent brilliancy between the jagged white clouds. He dashed on like a madman, resolved not to wait until the morning to see her. The exhilaration of the night wind, the large expanse of the open meadows, the weird effects of light and darkness caused by the constant interchange

of cloud and moonshine, added to his relief at finding himself once more outside the city-barriers and on the road to his beloved, made his heart swell with a feeling of reckless delight almost amounting to intoxication. He breathed freely, he took off his hat to let the wild breeze blow full upon his face; he longed to shout aloud as he careered along the familiar path. The clock was striking ten as he entered the Drusenheim inn; he inquired of the landlord whether there was yet a light in the parsonage, and was answered that the ladies had only just gone home,—they had said they were expecting a stranger. Goethe's heart fell; he had wished to be the only one; still, he might hasten forward and, at any rate, be the first; and with this thought he started upon his walk to the manse.

As he passed through the gate he recognized the figures of the two girls with their brother in the porch, just about to enter the house. They turned at the sound of his footsteps in the garden-lane, and he fancied he heard Alide whisper to Rahel, "Did I not say so? Here he is!"

"Am I too late to bid you good-evening?" he called out, as he hastened towards them.

"No, indeed," answered the girls, eagerly; "we are just going in to supper." And they both let him kiss their hands for welcome. Goethe followed them at once into the house, only pausing in the hall to throw off his heavy riding-cloak. They led

him into the supper-room, where the pastor and Madame Duroc were seated and a table was spread. As Rahel looked at him in the light, she burst into a loud laugh, for she had little command over herself. He wore a complete costume of black velvet garnished with silver lace; the wind had reddened his cheeks, and blown some of the powder out of his brown hair, giving it a soft gray color that contrasted more conspicuously than pure white with his youthful face. He was somewhat disconcerted by this odd reception, but the pastor and his wife rose and greeted him like an old acquaintance; and then Rahel, without the least embarrassment, said,—

“You must really pardon my laughing, Herr Goethe, but it is so comical, when I think of Fritz’s double and Dr. Julius Steck, to see you decked out so finely this evening.”

He answered good-humoredly, and in a short time the conversation flowed as freely as though he were already one of their family.

As for Alide, she was perfectly content. It was enough to have him once more in their midst; to feel that he made, if only for this one night, part of their home-circle; to know that she had but to raise her eyes to behold, in living reality, this face which for so long had been a shadowy vision perpetually before her. She was like a child, delighting to play little tricks with her happiness. While one of her family talked, she would avert her head

at times, and imagine that he was not there, just for the thrill it gave her to hear his vibrant young voice respond, or to turn suddenly and assure herself of his actual presence. But her joyous fancies did not make her pensive or abstracted; she entered with unwonted spirit into the conversation; her soft laughter rippled gayly forth, the color mounted to her cheeks, her blue eyes sparkled brilliantly. Her own family looked on in surprise at the magical transformation of their quiet, reserved Alide.

Finally they separated for the night. Goethe was disappointed at not having been able to find a moment's opportunity to whisper a word in her ear; but he soon fell asleep, with a feeling of profound satisfaction at knowing himself once more under this beloved roof.

CHAPTER VIII.

HAPPINESS.

THE wind had subsided in the night, and one of those rare soft days that belong to the golden weather called St. Martin's summer, shone from the cloudless skies. A pale, blue-green haze overhung the earth; the breath of the air had something indescribably caressing. If one had looked only at the fresh verdure of the pasture-slopes, the dusky foliage of the vineyards, or the brilliant bloom of the garden, it would not have been difficult to fancy that the glory of the year was just developing; but along the woodland paths, and in the despoiled orchard, the bare branches and the crumpled brown leaves underfoot told a different tale, and lent the pathetic grace of evanescence to the exquisite scene. Clear and musical through the still atmosphere pealed the village church bells; but after the noise of Strasburg every sound made music to Goethe, as he walked by the side of Alide along the sweet fading fields, with the Sabbath quiet in the air. They had much to tell each other, for they now lived over together the days they had passed apart; now did Alide confess that her heart had prophesied

his coming, and now she imparted to him her own serenity. The more familiar he became with this white maiden-soul, the more was he astonished at the circumspect cheerfulness, the naïveté combined with self-consciousness, the good and lovable qualities which at every word revealed themselves. He could discern, from the friendly greetings of the peasants whom they met, that she was benevolent and promoted their comfort. How many hours of such unalloyed happiness dare one promise one's self from life? And yet these two filled this perfect moment by looking forward and backward. They arranged their plans for the day, and decided how, among all the guests and the various amusements, they would keep together in the dance and the game.

Though they walked slowly, with many loiterings by the road, they reached the church all too soon for Goethe. The open joyousness of Alide's face gave way to a decorous expression of seriousness as she passed from the sunshine into the twilight of the sacred building. Goethe, young as he was, had long since dissociated the sentiment of religion from outward ceremony, and his thoughts and feelings underwent no change when he found himself in the place of worship. They sat alone, for Rahel and the mother were busied at home with preparations for their other guests. The young man dreamed away in a strange trance the hours of service; he was vaguely conscious of oc-

casional bursts of music and of the monotonous voice of the pastor, and after all was over he knew that he had sat through a long sermon, of which he did not recollect a single word. Now and then he gave a sudden furtive glance at his companion. She did not seem to remember that he was beside her; her long golden lashes rested upon her fresh cheek as she bent her eyes constantly upon her prayer-book; her face was irradiated by a pure, spiritual calm. Once only did she turn and look upon him, before the sermon began, with an ineffable expression of tranquil joy beaming from her eyes, and then again she was rapt in her own world of simple devotion, with a dim fancy that he was following her, and that the pious platitudes of her father were inspiring Goethe with the same celestial satisfaction with which they nourished her. The pastor spoke of death and suffering, but to her nothing was sad in this exalted hour: death itself did not mean separation, but only closer and eternal union; and what was suffering on earth with such a one to comfort and to be comforted?

But he was far from her world at this moment: his piercing intellect, that had so early discerned the paradoxes of men's beliefs and broken loose from the shackles of creed and dogma, was haunted by a childish superstition. He was overcome by the painful memory of the last time a woman's lips had pressed his own, and had cursed him while they kissed. He was no longer in the village

church, where the pastor's voice went droning on, and the country sounds of bird and insect came sleepily through the open window that let in the blue sunbeams and the warm, summer-like air. He was in the close, small room of his dancing-master, where a few months ago the passionate, sibyl-like French girl had wound her arms about his neck, thrust her long white fingers in his hair, pressed her own black locks against his cheek, and, kissing him repeatedly on the mouth, in a mad paroxysm of jealousy, cried out, "Woe upon woe for ever and ever to her who kisses these lips for the first time after me!"

It all came back to him now; indeed, he had not forgotten it heretofore, but he had without difficulty held himself aloof from women, for he was pleased to imagine that such a consecration sanctified no less than cursed his lips. It had even flattered his vanity to think that he had some subtle power to injure, in an unheard-of spiritual manner, any woman from whom he courted this favor, that may mean so much or so little. But now he paused to free himself from the spell; he knew that in the rural games that would be indulged in during the day he should in all probability be required to claim the forfeit of a kiss from his beloved, and he shuddered at the consequences of the harmless pastime, and taxed his utmost ingenuity to devise some means of evasion.

When the service was over, Alide rose with a

visible benediction upon her face ; but Goethe remained anxious and subdued. An unutterable pity and tenderness overcame him when he looked at her and thought that over and above his own will, nay, in opposition to the most sacred instincts of his heart, Fate working through him might injure, crush, or ruin this exquisite creature. However, when they were once more in the fragrant air of the open meadows, all morbid fears and presentiments passed from his mind. With an impatient toss of his head he shook them from him, as one might disperse a swarm of troublesome insects, and gave himself up wholly to the enjoyment of the present.

As they neared the parsonage, they saw the various guests enlivening with their bright-colored costumes the garden and porch. "Ah, there is dear Rosa Stockmar!" cried Alide. "I was so afraid she would not be with us,—I am sure you will like her, Herr Goethe. That is she in blue, standing under the apple-tree, with Rahel and Cousin Wilhelm. And there are Joachim Heller and his sister Margaret, and in the porch stands Dr. Braun. How pleasant that they should already have arrived!"

With the charming self-possession of a simple nature, she entered the gate with the stranger by her side, and welcomed them all heartily with such frank interchanges of affection between cousins and old acquaintances, as would have aroused her

new friend's jealousy had they not been given and taken with such innocent freedom. Then with equal ease and grace she presented Herr Wolfgang Goethe, and in a few moments the conversation was as lively and unrestrained as though they were a bevy of life-long friends.

"Let us go to my arbor," said Alide. "We shall be sheltered from the sun, which is quite too warm for November; and, besides, I have ordered my fairies to prepare a surprise for you there."

They set out in high spirits for the arbor, Alide foremost with her cousin Wilhelm, and Goethe with the merry Rosa Stockmar by his side. Now he could contrast his sweetheart's refinement of beauty, breeding, and nature with the provincial tone of her circle. Rosa was a gay, bright-eyed little creature, of thoroughly plebeian type, and, though there was nothing indecorous or even imprudent in her remarks and jests, still, their unabashed freedom and familiarity wellnigh amounted to coarseness. Almost immediately she began to rally her companion on his interest in their young hostess.

"I suppose you do not come from our parts," said she, scrutinizing him openly; "for I have never seen you nor heard your name before. But there is one thing I can answer for. You have never seen on either side of the Rhine a sweeter girl than Alide Duroc. She is a perfect darling. Mamma often tells me I am wrong to praise her

so much, for I shall never please where she is a favorite,—she is too stately and reserved. But, pshaw! what do I care? What is in me, that will come out, and I have my eyes well open. I know whom she has already pleased. Do you know what I will do? We are to have plenty of games this afternoon; I suppose you can play them, though you do look like His Highness's lord-in-waiting. Well, I will warrant you, when we play jack's-a-light, to win a forfeit from Alide, and you may ask for whatever you please. You don't look like a lad who would let his chances slip through his fingers."

Before Goethe could remonstrate, they had reached the crest of the little hill, and found themselves in Alide's "Rest." Her "surprise" was a luncheon spread in the middle of the grove; and the exclamations of delight and admiration which broke from the guests rewarded her for the pains she had bestowed on the tasteful decoration of her arbor. The meal was enjoyed with the buoyant merriment of youth, and here, as elsewhere, Goethe led the gayety. With song, jest, and anecdote he amused those within hearing, and exhilarated all by the contagious example of his own almost reckless spirits. Whatever he did, he did in earnest. It is this faculty of great men which makes their simplest action fresh and original; they are generous of their soul, they meet with abundant vitality the demands of every hour, and thus shed

a peculiar glory upon whatever claims their regard. To have seen Goethe at such a moment as this, one would have supposed him ambitious of no higher enjoyment than that of a frolic or a festival; he was the veriest boy of the party in liveliness and fun. And yet it needed no keen observer to perceive that "nothing he did but smacked of something greater than himself," for the magnetism of his personality bore as emphatically the impress of his genius as anything durable that he has left behind.

During the day and evening he succeeded skillfully in evading the forfeit of a kiss from Alide, though his escape was rendered the more difficult by the roguish interference of Rosa Stockmar and her companions, who tried to force them together in order to be amused with their confusion. The greater part of the day was spent in the open air, and the soft sunshine, the transparent haze, the delicate purity of the remote pale sky imperceptibly did their share towards filling with joyful serenity these two youthful hearts just expanding into the perfect blossom of love. The knowledge that each heart beat only for the other sufficed to make the presence of all this merry company unreal as any dream. The swift eyebeams interchanged, the pressure of a hand in the game, the close embrace in the rapid waltz, made a mute, delicious communication that satisfied them both for the time.

After dinner, Goethe had been talking with the pastor about the old gentleman's favorite theme, the rebuilding of the parsonage, and had offered to prepare a ground-plan. Dr. Duroc, highly pleased, hurried off at once to confer with the schoolmaster, so that the yard and foot measure might be ready early on the morrow. At that moment Alide hastened to Goethe's side. "How kind, how good you are," she said, "to humor my dear father on his weak side!—not, like others, to get weary of this subject, to avoid him, or to break it off. I must indeed confess to you that the rest of us do not desire this building: it would be too expensive for the congregation, and for us also. A new house, new furniture! Our guests would not feel comfortable with us, now that they are accustomed to the old building. Here we can treat them liberally; there we should find ourselves straitened in a wider sphere. But do not you fail to be agreeable. I thank you for it from my heart."

On the following day the measurement of the house took place. It was a slow proceeding, for Goethe was as little of an adept in the art as the schoolmaster himself. At last he decided to return to Strasburg immediately, to prepare more conveniently and deliberately the plan which had occurred to him. The good father was delighted at the young man's interest in the scheme, and granted permission to leave at once. Alide herself dismissed him with joy; now that each felt certain of

the other's love, the six leagues seemed no longer any distance, and a constant communication could be kept up through the diligence, messengers, and letters. He therefore once more bade farewell, with the promise of a speedy return, and, supported by a buoyant feeling of hope, set forth on his journey to town.

It was already dark when he reached his lodging, but the first thing he did was to seat himself at his desk and draw as neatly as possible the plan which he had conceived. When he had succeeded in sketching out a tolerably good idea of the whole, he laid it aside with a sigh of pleasure and satisfaction, and began a letter to Alide. It was late at night before he could tear himself away from this charming occupation. While he wrote, she seemed to be before him, brightening his dingy, lamp-lit room with her own open-air atmosphere. He could not weary of conjuring up in imagination the endowments of her beautiful nature and nourishing the hope of seeing her soon again. Early the next morning this letter was dispatched, with a little package of books, and his own messenger brought back to him her answer of thanks and affection. Thus for a few days the delicious nothings of love were transported between these bewitched ones, annihilating space and time, and uniting them in the closest communion of thoughts and feelings. There was no longer any need of an address from his worthy medical instructor. Those words spoken

at the right time had so completely cured him of his morbid desires that he had no particular inclination to see the professor or the patients again. At the end of the week he received a letter from Alide inviting him to a festival, for which some friends from the other side of the Rhine were also coming, and begging him to make arrangements for a long stay. This he did by packing at once a stout portmanteau on the diligence, and in a few hours he was in her presence.

She was standing in the centre of a noisy group of young people, holding her arm upraised, while they tried to guess what she concealed in her closed hand. He had not been announced, but she felt his presence as he stood in the doorway. Her arm dropped by her side; "Wolfgang!" she murmured under her breath, as she sprang forward to welcome him. But her delight was saved from seeming conspicuous by the apparently equal pleasure manifested on the part of all her family. "Papa, mamma, here is our good friend Goethe!" cried Rahel, as she warmly pressed his hand, while the pastor and his wife greeted him with the familiarity of an old friend.

"Who can he be?" "One would say they were all in love with him!" "Where can he have come from?" were the whispered comments of the guests as they saw their sport interrupted by this intruder.

But soon the rich, resonant voice of Goethe was heard above them all. "Do not let me interfere,

my dear, kind friends, with your pleasure. It is like coming home to find myself again in your happy circle; but, if Madame Mamma and the young ladies will excuse me, I will retire at once with you, Dr. Duroc, to show you the sketches I have brought, and with your permission I will return soon and enter into the game."

"What! already you have made these sketches? Impossible!" exclaimed the delighted pastor. "You are a capital fellow! Come with me at once, and we will look them over on the porch." And, resting his hand in a fatherly manner on the young man's shoulder, he went with him from the room.

When he saw the beauty of the spotless parchment, with the bold yet delicate lines traced upon it in accordance with his own dearest views, he was quite beside himself with joy.

"I see! I see!" he cried; "this is just such a plan as I would have designed myself. Here indeed is the most beautiful result attained with the greatest economy of means and combined with the highest utility. Ah, my dear boy, what genius inspired you in sketching this plan? You will one day be a great architect. But I stand and prate, instead of exhibiting this exquisite piece of workmanship to our friends within. Come back with me, and let me show it to them at once."

Goethe had stood by, smiling with pleasure at his own success and at the pastor's gratification, but he became serious at this, and interposed hurriedly,—

"Nay, my good sir, I am afraid yonder merry folks are not just now in the mood to examine my sketches carefully, and they might not concur in your flattering estimate."

"Tut, tut, child!" replied Dr. Duroc; "no false modesty! I think I know a good thing when I see it. Come along with me."

And with the sheets in one hand, and with the other gently drawing Goethe by the wrist, he returned in high good humor to the room. The game was just over, and the company were scattered about in little groups, evidently expecting, like so many children, some new diversion to be offered them.

"My good people," said the host, as he led Goethe among them, "I am proud to present to you my talented young friend Herr Wolfgang Goethe. Only see what a specimen of his handiwork I have here to show you!"

His visitors took little notice of Goethe's profound bow, but hastened towards the library-table, curious to see what novel entertainment was going forward. The young man, however, was no whit disconcerted, for a reassuring smile from Alide, together with a deprecatory shrug of her shoulders as she indicated by a cunning side-glance the other guests, dispelled immediately any embarrassment which so brusque an introduction and so ungracious a reception might have occasioned.

"Look!" cried the simple pastor; "is not this

just such a manse as you would wish your vicar to dwell in?" And he unfolded sheet after sheet and pointed out the various beauties and conveniences. But he met with no sympathy on the part of his friends: knowing the work to be that of so exceedingly young a man, whose name was, moreover, quite unfamiliar, each one was anxious to cavil at every particular and thus display his own superior knowledge.

"These chimneys are quite out of date," said one: "they have been superseded by a much better style."

"The porch is entirely out of harmony with the rest of the building," sneered another: "one might as well vault a Gothic arch over an Ionic capital."

"It is not possible to throw the stairs so far back," suggested the wisest head of all. "It looks well on paper, but a very little practical experience would have told him that it could not be carried into effect."

Goethe stood by in calm superiority, with a feeling of intense amusement. It was as if he had no interest in the success of these sketches which he had wrought out so diligently and with such admirable skill. He was too happy in Alide's presence to entertain a moment's anger, and he heard their rude and ignorant remarks with the unconcerned critical pleasure with which he might have sat a spectator of one of Molière's comedies. But Alide

was flushed with shame and indignation at the unmannerly behavior of her guests, no less than at their injustice to this gifted, courteous, incomparable young man. She could not have conceived that their opinions were not of the slightest account to him, for this was all her world, and she longed to go forward to Goethe and efface the painful impression with kind, encouraging words.

As for the pastor, he assumed an odd expression of wonder and bewilderment on hearing such unsparing censure of that which had to him appeared so excellent. But all other feelings were absorbed in rage when a pompous, officious, elderly man behind him, coolly taking a pencil from his pocket, drew with a bold, free hand such coarse lines and marks upon the clear white paper as irretrievably to destroy the symmetry of the original design.

"How dare you, sir?" cried the pastor, suffocated with anger and disappointment. "How have you the insolence——"

"Papa! papa!" interposed Rahel, trying to calm him.

"Do not be so vexed, dear sir," said Goethe, quietly stepping forward. "It is nothing, I assure you, that cannot be easily remedied. I am more than indebted to this experienced gentleman for his generous suggestions. In reality, sir, no harm is done. You know I told you these were but the sketches from which the perfect drawings were afterwards to be constructed; and I doubt not that

I shall be able to devise something far better on a second trial."

"Yes, you are kind, you are generous," said the pastor; "but this is too outrageous. Perhaps in a little while I may be able to forget it." And, endeavoring to conceal his excited temper, he hastened from the room.

Alide now advanced to Goethe, and, taking him frankly by the hand, she thanked him aloud for his attention to her father and for his patience under so great an annoyance. Just then the discomfited author of all this mischief, who had erred only through ignorance, mustered sufficient courage to step up to them both, and earnestly begged Goethe's pardon for the vexation he had caused him. Goethe was only too glad to accept his excuses, and thus in a few moments perfect harmony was restored.

"Do you not recognize Raymond and Melusina?" whispered Alide, as the repentant marriage-feast retired. "It is Herr Bernard, and that dainty little creature in the corner is his wife. We call her Melusina ever since you read to us in the summer-house."

Thus he was flattered by seeing the impression his ideas had already made on this circle, of which he had yet seen so little. His words were treasured, his thoughts were adopted, his least action was rendered significant by the importance it assumed in these indulgent eyes.

The remainder of the day was spent with still

more gayety and pleasure than the last Sunday he had passed by the side of Alide. Without effort, he succeeded in imparting additional zest and vivacity to every pastime and heightening every frolic by many a comical choice. His unbounded happiness made him even more than usually talkative, merry, ingenious, forward; and yet he was kept in moderation by esteem and attachment. She on her part was open, sympathizing, cheerful, and communicative. They both appeared to live for the company, and yet lived only for each other. After dinner they went outside, for the season was particularly mild and genial, and sought the shade, where social games were begun. On redeeming the forfeits, everything was carried to excess. The gestures which were commanded, the acts which were to be done, the problems which were to be solved, all showed a mad joy that knew no limits. Alide shone by many a droll thought; she appeared to Goethe more charming than ever. All superstitious, hypochondriacal fears vanished, and when the opportunity offered of heartily kissing one whom he loved so tenderly, he did not miss it, nor deny himself a repetition of the pleasure.

After the games, one of the party succeeded in hunting up a couple of village musicians, and a waltz was enjoyed in the meadow. The national dance known as the "Allemande" had superseded all others, and in this their young limbs and light hearts did not tire. It was Alide's favorite amuse-

ment, and she was delighted to find in Wolfgang a graceful, expert partner. Again and again they waltzed together, losing sight of all prudent considerations in the exhilaration caused by the lively movement, the close embrace, the whispered words that thrilled through either's soul, the intoxicating freedom of the fresh mountain-air, the elastic earth beneath, and the boundless horizon around.

There was an interlude in the music, and he led her some distance from the company to a rustic seat that had been built in a circle around the colossal trunk of an oak-tree. She was not red and breathless like the others; the fluttering of her heart was more evident in the increased brilliancy of her eyes than in the scarcely-perceptible flush that heightened the natural rose of her cheeks. Under the almost transparent ruffles of her white stomacher, he could see the purer warm white of her soft neck rise and fall with somewhat quickened palpitations, but outwardly she was as calm as though she had not taken part in the waltz. For this delicate, supple creature, motion was as easy and natural as rest.

Just as she took her seat, Rahel, who had followed them with her eyes, advanced hurriedly and whispered in her sister's ear, loud enough to be heard by Goethe, "Everybody is remarking you; mamma is greatly displeased, and we all advise you to go no further in this wild manner." So saying, she ran away to rejoin her companions. Alide

looked up at Goethe with the troubled, frightened expression of a child who appeals for a caress no less than for protection. Her eyes were brimming with tears, her cheeks glowing with pain and shame. He took the dear little flower-face between both his hands, and, bending over her, kissed tenderly the pouting lips. "My darling, I love you: is not that enough?" The wistful mouth broke into a radiant smile, though the dim moisture of the eyes gathered into two lustrous, happy tears that quivered upon the lashes. Gently she disengaged herself from the clasp of his hands, and, with a little sigh of peaceful joy, rested her head in silence upon his breast.

For a moment neither spoke or moved, save that the caressing fingers of Goethe stroked softly the warm, wavy gold above her brow. He was the first to break the stillness.

"I know that I am foolish, sweetheart; your loving kindness, your tender confidence, these are much, far more than I deserve, and yet my heart hungers in this silence to hear you utter such words as I have spoken."

She broke from his embrace, clasped her hands together, and, upturning to him a countenance so transfigured and exalted by love that he would scarcely have known it for that of the child who had reposed on his breast, whispered, passionately, "I love you—I love you—I love you!" And, almost falling from her seat, she hid her burning face in her hands.

“That is my own Alide ; how can I thank you ?” he said, soothingly, as with indescribable tenderness he withdrew her hands and kissed them gratefully. Then, slipping one quietly through his arm, he went on : “ Rise, my betrothed ; we will take a walk through the meadows ; the fresh air will cool your flushed cheeks, and we shall be able to meet once more with composure our friends.”

She obeyed, though her slight frame trembled as she leaned upon his arm. But it was only the excitement of the first few moments that wrought such a powerful effect upon her sensitive temperament. She was soon quieted into her ordinary calmness, and even her lively flow of spirits was restored, as she walked with him across the sunset fields. Long and slender before them their shadows fell upon the bronzed grass that basked in the last rich glow of the autumn sunset. A narrow bar of purple cloud rested motionless in the green clearness of the western sky ; it was the only vapor in that sweep of ethereal brilliancy from east to west. So these two sauntered amid the gorgeous panorama of earth and cloud and sky, carrying within their own hearts the very fire of heaven.

The daylight had faded, and moon and stars were rising, as they rejoined their companions at the parsonage.

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER-THOUGHTS.

THROUGHOUT the evening the extravagant gayety of the merry party continued. At supper, people did not return to their sober senses; dancing went on far into the night, and there was as little want of healths and other incitements to drinking as at noon. Amid a great deal of boisterous mirth, the last good-nights were exchanged after midnight, and the guests conducted to their various apartments. Alide was tripping through the silent hall, when she heard her name uttered in a suppressed voice, and, turning round, she saw her mother standing at her own door, beckoning to her to come in. She obeyed swiftly and noiselessly: preoccupied with joyous thoughts, she did not remark the serious, almost sad, expression of her mother's face.

"I have a word to say to you before you sleep," said Madame Duroc, seating herself on a couch and motioning Alide to a low bench at her feet. "I am afraid I must give you pain," she went on, gently caressing the golden little head at her knees. "I had thought to keep you still a child for awhile

yet with me ; but no, to-night I must speak to you as a woman, and let you know the grave significance of a life that has already begun in earnest. Alide, your conduct to-day has been very displeasing to me : beyond the limits of decorum and of courtesy to your old friends, you have evinced your preference for this young man Goethe, who has ingratiated himself so suddenly into your father's heart and into our family circle. It is now only a little over a month that you have known him ; you are not giddy or thoughtless like some of your companions, but you are infatuated by the charm of his appearance and address. A word is sufficient, my child, for one so sensible and docile as you. Let this day be the last that you distinguish this stranger by so much kindness. Your fancy has been kindled, your imagination excited ; but go to your room, examine yourself duly, pray to your heavenly Father for guidance and discretion, and try to stifle at once so vain a sentiment before it develops into something that may occasion a life-trouble."

She paused, but Alide did not stir or speak : she was conscious of a strange sort of double existence as she sat with her head buried in her mother's lap ; she was the happy, fortunate Alide, Goethe's beloved, and she was the wayward child to be reproved and guided by the warning words of her elders. Seeing her so still, Madame Duroc was alarmed lest the effect of a reprimand had

been too harsh upon such a sensitive temperament.

"Alide," she whispered, tenderly, "do not be so much overcome. I have only spoken now because I did not wish to leave it too late; nothing is lost as yet."

"Oh, mamma," said Alide, upturning suddenly a face neither blushing nor tearful, but smiling, trustful, and composed, "you are very, very good to me, but you do not understand: it is not shame that I feel, it is pride and joy and happiness. I love him!"

"My child, you do not know what you are saying!" cried Madame Duroc; "you do not know what those words mean. You cannot realize what disgrace it is for one of our sex to take the initiative in such a matter as this. You have not recognized his power, my poor, confiding child; the whole world is open to one of his force and genius. He will despise the choicest gifts your simple heart can proffer him; he will——"

"Oh, mamma, hush!" interrupted Alide, springing to her feet. "It is you who do not know him, who do not know me: we are already betrothed."

"Betrothed!" exclaimed Madame Duroc, sinking back in her seat.

"Do not be angry, dear, good mamma," said Alide, kneeling before her and taking both her hands affectionately. "He was to tell you himself to-morrow. We had arranged it all, and I should

not have spoken now, but I could not help it. It is much better to avoid from the beginning all misunderstandings and mistakes, is it not?"

Madame Duroc made no answer, but silently folded her daughter to her breast, and kissed repeatedly the soft white brow. "Since it is thus," she said, at last, "may you be blessed!" And Alide felt a scalding tear drop upon her cheek.

"Ah, you are harassed after a tiresome day, dear mamma," said she, caressingly. "It is late now; I wish I could have waited till to-morrow to tell you; it is not possible in this dim room, at this melancholy hour, to realize so much light and joy cast on one's whole life. Oh, mamma, what a noble son you will see in him to-morrow, in the cheerful daylight! and how you will rejoice with me in my beautiful destiny!"

An hour later, Alide was sleeping profoundly and dreamlessly after the excitements of this wonderful white day. But Frau Duroc's pillow was stained with tears pressed painfully from wakeful eyes. Her mind was possessed with gloomy forebodings: the mother-heart was yearning in the darkness after the darling of the nest, so suddenly and irrevocably flown.

As for Goethe, he, like Alide, outwearied by such strong emotions, had fallen at once into a deep, refreshing slumber; but scarcely had he slept thus for a few hours when he was awakened by a heat and tumult in his blood. Stretched out, defense-

less as he was, his imagination now presented to him the liveliest forms. Excited by love and passion, wine and dancing, his thoughts raged in confusion, and his feelings were tortured into a state of despair. He was thoroughly, keenly awake,—what apparition was this standing by his bedside? The French girl, Lucinda, clad in black, with night-black hair, glowing cheeks, sparkling eyes, and passionate gestures, slowly receding from him. His lips were still afire from her ardent kiss, her shrill imprecation rang painfully in his ears, “Woe upon woe for ever and ever!” as she pointed with her long thin finger opposite to her, where stood Alide, pale, motionless, with her fair, disheveled locks waving about her white-robed form, outstretching her arms towards him in piteous supplication, feeling the consequences of the curse, and yet ignorant of their cause. Between these two, he lay trembling in every limb, as little able to ward off the spiritual effects of the adventure as to avoid the evil-boding kiss. Yes, he had harmed irretrievably the dearest of beings,—the spell had not been broken; far from having freed himself from the curse, it was flung back from his lips into his heart. He sprang up in bed, and looked wildly about him. The illusion vanished, but he could not calm the fever of his blood, that boiled and throbbed in his veins. The myriad possible results of his passion presented themselves to him in such sombre colors as utterly to preclude the chance of

sleep or repose for the remainder of the night. He saw this exquisite maiden whom he loved so tenderly, ruined, deflowered, dead. Could it be possible, he mused, that despite the energy of will, the passionate vitality, the comprehensive intellect with which Fate had endowed him, she nevertheless had made him her creature, her football, to such a degree as to impel him along to this pre-ordained end, notwithstanding his most resolute efforts towards the opposite direction? And why had this innocent, beautiful girl, formed so perfectly for happiness, been selected as the victim? Or again, what purpose was he destined to accomplish so lofty and so necessary that such elements as these, the life, the love, the happiness of human souls like his own, should be cast into his hands, to mould as he pleased? Bah! that was the privilege of the gods: to what blasphemy were his reckless thoughts leading him?

Fortunately, daylight peeping in through a chink of the shutter, and the sun stepping forth and vanquishing all the powers of night, put an end to his mad fancies. He was soon in the open air, and refreshed if not restored. The sight of Alide, the feeling of her love, the cheerfulness of everything around him, all reproved him, that in the midst of the happiest days he could harbor such dismal night-birds in his bosom.

CHAPTER X.

QUIET PLEASURES.

As the winter approached, Goethe was obliged to pass the greater part of his time in the city, though, to say the truth, he was there as much absorbed by the image of Alide as while he remained in her presence. Thus he availed himself of every conceivable pretext to ride over to the parsonage, to pass the long, pleasant evenings in that happily-united circle, and return through the frosty red dawn to his occupations in Strasburg. The joyous Christmas festival, celebrated with so much quaint and picturesque ceremony in Germany, afforded him the opportunity for an unusually prolonged visit. They enjoyed together all the healthy winter pastimes, no less varied than the sports of milder seasons; the long, rapid drives and rides over the frozen ground, or in sledges through the snowy fields, the merry skating adventures upon the ponds in the vicinity, and the cheerful evenings in the snug inclosure of the library, where all the family gathered around the blazing logs of the great open hearth and listened to him unweariedly while he read aloud or recounted to them many a winter's tale.

The affair was allowed to take its course without the question being directly asked as to what was to be the result. The parents thought themselves compelled to let the young folks continue for awhile in a wavering condition, with the hope that accidentally something might be confirmed for life, better perhaps than could be produced by a long-arranged plan. It was believed that perfect confidence could be placed both in Alide's sentiments and in Goethe's rectitude, of which, on account of his forbearance even from innocent caresses, a favorable opinion had been entertained. The little birds in his heart began to sing once more ; he was able to give rhythmical expression to his happiness, and with his letters he would frequently send such verses as were the natural outpouring of his ethereal fancies and ardent longings. Painted ribbons had just then come into fashion : he amused himself with designing the most fantastic and poetical devices on a few silken strips of blue and lilac and white. These he accompanied with the following stanzas :

Tiny leaflets, tiny flowers,
Lightly from thy fingers fling,
Waving on the airy ribbon,
Young and kindly god of Spring.

Waft it on thy wings, O Zephyr,
Twine it round my sweetheart's gown.
Let her step before the mirror,
Laughing as she looketh down.

Sees herself with roses girdled,
Fresh as any rose, the maid.
Grant me but one glance, my darling,
And I am enough repaid.

Trust the love my heart that filleth,
Frankly give thy hand to me.
May the bond between us, dearest,
No slight band of roses be!

As soon as the spring had fairly set in, he made preparations for a prolonged stay at the parsonage. They now passed quietly and pleasantly several weeks in each other's society. The habit of being together became more and more confirmed, and nothing was known save that Goethe belonged to this circle. They were left unobserved, as was generally the custom there and then, and it depended only on themselves to go over the country with a larger or smaller party and visit the friends in the neighborhood. On both sides of the Rhine, in Hagenau, Fort Louis, Philippsburg, and the Ortenau, Goethe found dispersed such persons as he had seen united at Sesenheim, every one by himself a friendly, hospitable host, throwing open kitchen and cellar just as willingly as garden and vineyard.

The islands of the Rhine were often a goal to their water-expeditions. There, without pity, they put the cool inhabitants of the clear river into the kettle, or the spit, or into the boiling fat, and would perhaps, more than was reasonable, have settled themselves in the snug fishermen's huts, if the

abominable Rhine-gnats had not, after some time, driven them away. At this intolerable interruption of one of their most charming parties of pleasure, when everything else was prosperous, when the affection of the lovers seemed to increase with the good success of the enterprise, and they had nevertheless come home too soon, unsuitably and inopportunately, Goethe, actually in the presence of the good pastor, broke out into blasphemous expressions, and assured him that the gnats alone were sufficient to remove the thought that a good and wise Deity had created the world. The pious old gentleman, by way of reply, solemnly called him to order, and explained that these gnats and other vermin had not arisen until after the fall of our first parents; or that if there were any of them in Paradise, they had only pleasantly hummed and had not stung. The impetuous youth was calmed at once, for an angry man is easily appeased when he is forced to smile; but he nevertheless asserted that there was no need, in such case, of an angel with a burning sword to drive the guilty pair out of the garden, for this must have been effected by means of great gnats on the Tigris and the Euphrates. The simple old man laughed in his turn, for he could understand a joke, or, at any rate, let one pass.

However, the enjoyment of the daytime and season in this noble country was always serious and elevating to the heart. Goethe had only to

resign himself to the present, to enjoy the clearness of the pure sky, the brilliancy of the rich earth, the mild evenings, the warm nights, by the side of his beloved, or in her vicinity. For weeks together they were favored with pure, ethereal mornings, when the sky displayed itself in all its magnificence, having watered the earth with superfluous dew; and, that this spectacle might not become too simple, clouds after clouds piled themselves over the distant mountains, now in this spot, now in that. They stood for days, nay, for weeks, without obscuring the clear sky; and even the transient storms refreshed the country and gave lustre to the green, which again glistened in the sunshine before it could become dry. The double rainbow, the two-colored borders of a dark gray and nearly black streak in the sky, were nobler, more highly colored, more decided, but also more transient, than the artist had ever before observed.

In the midst of these objects, Goethe's desire for poetizing again came forward, and he composed for Alide several songs to well-known melodies, which might have made a pretty little book. Many an hour did he pass by her side at the harpsichord, hearing his own words caroled forth melodiously from her beloved lips, while she, for her part, strove to dedicate all the fire and poetry of her nature to the proper interpretation of his inspired productions.

The resources of his wit, liveliness, and spirits were never at an end. At the same time that he proved in countless ways his sincere and ardent attachment to Alide, he succeeded in making himself the object of the enthusiastic admiration and the warmest friendship of all her family and circle. Even the wary mother consented to throw aside, as a weak selfishness more akin to the pride of appropriation than to disinterested affection, the misgivings and suspicions which she had at first entertained. It was impossible to resist the frank generosity and gentleness of his heart, combined as they were with so winning an exterior, so profound an intelligence, and so brilliant and versatile a genius.

That he might fulfil and even go beyond his promise to the pastor, of a new and elaborate plan for the manse, he persuaded a young adept in architecture to work instead of himself. Thus the ground-plan sketch and section of the house were soon completed; court-yard and garden were not forgotten; and a detailed but very moderate estimate was added. These testimonials of his friendly endeavors obtained the kindest reception; and now the good father, seeing that Goethe had the best will to serve him, came forward with one wish more,—this was to see his pretty blue garden-chair adorned with flowers and other ornaments. Goethe showed himself accommodating, and prevailed upon Alide and Rahel, who were both clever with the

brush, to lend a hand in the pleasing task. Colors, pencils, and other requisites were fetched from the tradesmen and apothecaries of the nearest town. They worked upon it always in the open air, and succeeded in decorating it with the most delicate devices. They were standing one morning in the sunshine, admiring the last strokes of their handiwork, when the gate was opened and a visitor advanced towards the house. It was Max Waldstein, who was rarely able to leave his studies, though the bond between himself and Rahel was now a solemnly acknowledged betrothal. After the exchange of merry greetings, he was called upon to admire the painted chair.

"It is quite a masterpiece, I declare," he cried; "and you must have been pretty diligent, for I see that before any of it has had time to dry the whole is finished. Did you begin this morning?"

"You unappreciative man!" exclaimed Rahel, indignantly. "It represents the labor of a fortnight."

Goethe and Alide stood contemplating their work with an odd puzzled expression.

"Why, then, look here," said practical Max, with a hearty laugh, as he gently pressed the tip of his finger against the bright leaves and withdrew it stained with the fresh green paint. "My intellectual young friend Wolfgang has forgotten that he must varnish his colors to make them fast. Or stay, I see what it is: you have bought the

wrong sort of varnish, and your chair will never dry! If the dear old pastor takes his ease in this, he will exhibit a quaintly embroidered coat in his pulpit on Sunday."

The artists looked at one another for a moment with crest-fallen countenances, but finally Goethe broke into the jolliest laugh. "Why, this is a veritable Wakefield mistake!" he cried. "Let us make the best of it, dear friends: since the varnish cannot be changed now, let us first try to dry our exquisite designs with fire, sun, rain, wind,—every element under heaven. Then, if the worst comes, who knows but we may have as merry a time rubbing off our colors as we have already had in laying them on?"

But neither sunshine nor draught, neither fair nor wet weather, was of any avail. Meantime, they were obliged to make use of an old lumber-room, and nothing was left but to efface the ornaments with more assiduity than they had painted them; and the unpleasantness was increased by finding that, after the operation, even the original ground-color could not be restored to its former brilliancy. Goethe did not fail to take the lesson to heart, seeing that the artist may become so absorbed in the ideal portion of his work as totally to ignore the practical and useful foundations on which alone any substantial fabric of beauty can be reared. The young philosopher was willing to bear good-humoredly the twits and jests of the

whole family, in consideration of impressing upon his memory so important a maxim.

By such trifling disagreeable contingencies, however, which happened at intervals, they were as little interrupted in their cheerful life as Dr. Primrose and his amiable family, for many an unexpected pleasure befell both themselves and their friends and neighbors. Weddings and christenings, the erection of a building, an inheritance, a prize in the lottery, were reciprocally announced and enjoyed. They shared all joy together like a common property, and wished to heighten it by mind and love. It was not the first nor the last time that Goethe found himself in families and social circles at the very moment of their highest bloom, and he contributed not a little to the lustre of such epochs.

It was the middle of May when he decided to return to Strasburg. He had originally been sent there to gain a doctor's degree. On his departure from Frankfort he had promised his father, and resolved within himself, to write a dissertation; and he was now determined to set about this task in earnest. He had indeed begun it before his first visit to the parsonage; but his sudden passion and the poetical visions which it inspired had driven from his head all practical matters. He himself reckoned it as one of the irregularities of his life that he treated this material business as a mere collateral affair. It is the fault of those who can do many things, he said, that they trust every-

thing to themselves. He had pretty well acquired a survey of the science of jurisprudence and all its frame-work; but he felt well enough that he lacked an infinite deal to fill up the legal commonplaces which he had proposed. The proper knowledge was wanting, and no inner tendency urged him to such subjects. Indeed, quite another science, medicine, had completely carried him away.

Before Goethe left the parsonage, he wrung from Alide and Rahel their consent to make their long-talked-of visit to Strasburg. The Durocs were related to some families in the city of good note and respectability and comfortably off as to circumstances. Their cousins the Burkhardts were often at Sesenheim. The older persons, the parents and aunts, being less movable, heard so much of the life there, of the increasing charms of the daughters, and even of Goethe's influence, that they first wished to become acquainted with him; and after he had visited them they desired to see all the family together, especially as they thought they owed the Sesenheim folks a friendly reception in return. There was much discussion on all sides: the mother could scarcely leave her household duties; Rahel had a horror of the town, for which she was not fitted; and Alide had no inclination for it. Thus the affair was put off until it was brought to a decision by Goethe's enforced departure, and his assertion that it would be impossible for him to come again into the country;

for all agreed that it would be better to see each other in the city, and under some restraint, than not to see each other at all.

No formal betrothal in the presence of witnesses had taken place, and yet the pastor gave Goethe his blessing, the mother kissed his brow at parting, as though he were already their son; and it was considered quite natural that he bade Alide farewell affectionately as a lover should. He set off in high spirits, with a heart at rest in his bosom and a mind already alert for the active duties that he must accomplish before he could again indulge in holiday pleasures.

For Alide, as she turned back into her home, it was as if the light had been blotted from the day, the spirit of life had departed from the household. There was a heavier sadness in her heart than the brief term of separation warranted, and she saw a dismal omen wherever her eyes fell. But her sanguine temperament rebounded soon into its accustomed cheerfulness and gayety. She succeeded in dispelling the cloud of oppression that had overhung her, as a wrong to herself, a wrong to him. She resolved in his absence to realize the lofty ideal of life which he had inculcated; though, to say the truth, he had but put it into words for her, for she had always animated the whole family circle with the natural liveliness of her admirably-tempered disposition. One could not behold the glad serenity of her countenance, which seemed

like a finer, more ethereal grace superadded to her physical beauty, without fancying her a creature born and nurtured for happiness. The rare capacity for enjoyment was here in the highest degree developed. The subtle feminine faculty was hers of resting content in the conscious possession of a great joy. One could sooner imagine her gently withdrawn from existence in the flush of youthful love and beauty, than estranged from the brightness and hilarity which formed so essential a part of herself. What harm could befall one so delicately constituted that the first rough shock of distress or calamity would, in all probability, snap the frail link between body and spirit and set free the immortal soul of joy?

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE CATHEDRAL.

It was a foggy day in early June, with occasional heavy showers of rain, when Madame Duroc and her daughters set out on their journey to Strasburg. The pastor could not leave his parish-duties to accompany them, so he drove with them over to the Drusenheim inn, and, after seeing them comfortably seated in the diligence, with many an affectionate embrace and injunction to take care of themselves and each other, he bade them God-speed. It seemed like a flat, level country across which the diligence was painfully dragged by the steaming horses, for the majestic shapes of the mountains were lost in the fog which clung to their summits and sides. Rahel was nervous and excited at the thought of all that would be expected of her in the city, and irritated, moreover, by the unpleasantness and tedium of the drive through the rain, when a little sunshine would have made it a charming excursion. But Alide was satisfied with a glimpse now and then through the torn cloud-curtain of meadow, hill, or leafy wood: she had learned every curve and landmark

of the road since Wolfgang had been going constantly back and forth. There was even an agreeable mystery about the dense vapor which encompassed them, and she felt as though she were traveling to an enchanted city that would gradually shape itself out of the mist.

There were no passengers besides themselves in the coach, and their mother entertained them with descriptions of the city as she remembered it in her youth, before the Alsatian customs had given way to French innovations. "Well, we are nearing it now," cried Alide. "Sec, there are the gardens and the public walks. Ah! one can hardly hear one's own voice over these rough stones." And she was forced to keep silence as the lumbering vehicle rattled through the noisy lanes. They passed long rows of irregular houses, squares, shops, markets, and churches, with at intervals a glimpse, from the most unexpected corners, of the solemn Minster, until finally the diligence was brought up in the court-yard of a hotel.

"I do not see the Burkhardts anywhere," said Rahel, peering anxiously from the window.

"I will take you to your cousins. Welcome, welcome to Strasburg, dear friends!" cried a well-known voice at the door, and Goethe stood ready to help them alight.

"I hope you have not been wearied, Frau Mamma, by your drive through this dismal weather. Your girls bring the sunshine along with them.

Ah, if you knew how I have looked forward to this day!" And he gazed frankly and ardently into Alide's eyes.

He carried their cloaks and valises across the hotel-yard as he led them to the carriage which was awaiting them. Fräulein Burkhardt sprang from within as she saw them approach; she welcomed her kinswomen gracefully and affectionately, apologizing for the absence of her mother, whose uncertain health had forbidden her venturing out in this wet weather. "I am a thousand times obliged to you, Herr Goethe!" she cried, in her shrill, thin voice, as the carriage rolled away. "We shall expect you this evening."

Anna Burkhardt was a short, slim girl, whose narrow peaked face, with its almost imperceptible lips, long, sharp nose, and prominent chin, might have belonged to an old woman had it not been relieved by a fresh, young complexion, more delicately colored than those of her cousins, young, brown, inexpressive eyes, and a profusion of soft brown hair. Her feet were small, but it was only owing to the skill of her bootmaker that they appeared well shaped; and her thin, veiny hands had no beauty when ungloved, save that of numerous sparkling rings. And yet few people considered her either plain or unattractive: her manners were so suave, so graceful, so exquisitely refined, that they formed a charm and a beauty in themselves. Small in stature and insignificant in appearance as

she was, these gave her presence a peculiar dignity and importance. Beneath this polished surface there was no generous warmth in the blood; a naturally envious and even spiteful disposition was concealed under the bland exterior of a precocious woman of the world, and an unerring tact served for all her purposes as a substitute for culture and intelligence. Perhaps it was owing to the fact that her mother had long been an invalid and had intrusted to Anna the entire direction of the household, that the girl had lost all the simplicity of her age; but, be this as it might, her graceful, high-bred, worldly-wise personality found more admirers than many a fresher and prettier girl. Poor, blundering little Rahel, with her delicately-chiseled face and picturesque coloring, found it difficult to shine beside this almost homely cousin of hers; and yet if any one could have put her at her ease, by covering her mistakes, ignoring her confusion, and endeavoring to make her appear to advantage, it would have been Anna Burkhardt. But Rahel was beyond the reach of help: she persisted in seeing only an additional discouragement in the easy grace and tact of Anna's bearing, and in the end her friendliest well-wishers found that the kindest mode of treatment with her was to leave her alone and let her stumble along as well as she was able.

The second daughter, Margaret, was strikingly contrasted with her sister: she was entirely with-

out Anna's winning courtesy, and indeed was condemned by most of the matrons of her society as having "no manners." She was scarcely prettier than Anna, and yet she was still more admired. She had a charming little blonde head and a transparent, colorless complexion; but there her beauties ended: her face was distinctly German in its contour, her mouth large, her nose broad and upturned, and in figure she was nearly as short as Anna, though fuller and better proportioned. She was bright, amusing, and if not precisely witty, yet an unabashed candor and naïveté lent her conversation a certain piquancy of its own. At the first glance it would have been almost impossible to believe that she was not a pretty girl: she looked as if she had stepped out of a picture. Unlike Anna, she wore the simplest things; there were no jewels upon her pretty, plump hands, and her small, fine ears remained unpierced; and yet every detail of her costume, more than coquettish, was actually artistic. With such natural advantages as either Alide or Rahel possessed, how would these shrewd city-girls, who knew how to turn everything to account, have distinguished themselves in the circle to which they were born! And nevertheless, beside them, their beautiful country cousins seemed almost devoid of attractions.

Now was Goethe to find his fair friends whom he had been accustomed to see only in a rural scene, and whose image had appeared to him hith-

erto only before a background of waving boughs, flowing brooks, nodding wild-flowers, and a horizon open for miles,—now was he to find them for the first time in town rooms, which indeed were spacious in themselves, but narrowed by furniture, carpets, curtains, glasses, and porcelain figures. It had a singular effect upon him when he entered the Burkhardt drawing-room early in the evening of the Durocs' arrival. Alide, whom his eyes first sought and found, seemed unfamiliar, almost strange, in this uncongenial atmosphere; her surroundings appeared to render commonplace everything about her which had before struck him as eminently becoming and poetical. Something incongruous offended his artistic sense as he beheld this simply-clad country-girl, with her one long golden braid falling down her back like the bourgeois in the street, and her high-heeled little boots and silver-clocked red stockings plainly to be seen under her scant furbelow, while around her were grouped the pale, delicate, elegant town-ladies in their flowing, silky French gowns, harmonizing perfectly with the luxurious appointments of the room itself. With his lively feeling for everything present, he could not at once adapt himself to the contradiction of the moment. All this, however, was but a flash through his mind when he first caught sight of her; for when she rose with graceful, unconcealed pleasure to receive him, as composedly as she would have done in her own

house, she was again his sweetheart and his pride. As he bent and kissed her ungloved hand, she did not see, and she would not have understood, the burning blush that tingled in his cheeks. "Dear friend," she murmured, innocently, "what a joy it is to be once more together!" He did not speak, but as he raised his head his loving eyes gave sincere and eloquent response.

Several guests were expected besides himself, though he was the first to arrive: they were to have a dance and a supper, and in the interval were to entertain themselves, after the approved city fashion, with conversation alone. Rural games and the myriad resources of country life were of course quite out of the question, and Rahel for one knew not how to fill up the gaps. The poor girl looked almost as she said she felt, "like a maid-servant," with her short petticoat and her high, tight waist, and by her awkward self-consciousness she rendered the disparity between herself and her cousins still more conspicuous. As she gave her hand to Goethe, she muttered, in an almost audible whisper, "It is like a breath from the country to see your face here. Did I not tell you I would never feel at home in Strasburg?"

When the visitors arrived, he had an opportunity to contrast the appearance and behavior of the Duroc family with those of the society which formed his own circle. The dignified and calmly noble demeanor of the mother was per-

fectly adapted to the situation ; she was in no wise different from the other ladies. But Rahel was painfully ill at ease, fancying that the eyes of the whole company were riveted upon her. When she was spoken to, she either answered in monosyllables, or plunged into random assertions on subjects of which she was totally ignorant. She seemed to look to Goethe for support and assistance, and frequently succeeded in embarrassing him also by her unconventional familiarity, and her untimely allusions to incidents and jests that were not understood outside of the Duroc parsonage. As she had formerly called to him in the gardens or beckoned him aside in the fields if she had anything particular to say to him, she did also the same here, when she drew him into the recess of a window. She had the most unimportant things to say to him,—nothing but what he knew already, that she wished herself by the Rhine, over the Rhine, or even in Turkey. He did his best to appease her, but without success.

Alide, on the contrary, was highly remarkable in this position. Properly speaking, she also did not suit it ; but it bore witness to her character that, instead of finding herself adapted to this condition, she unconsciously moulded the condition according to herself. She acted here as she had acted with the society in the country : she knew how to animate every moment, and, without creating any disturbance, she put all in motion. She

spoke of the wardrobe, the ornaments, the personal graces of her cousins, without affectation, and considered and admired them without envy; yet all the time she seemed perfectly content with her individual customs and appearance. Goethe she treated the same as ever: she seemed to give him no preference, but that of communicating her desires and wishes to him rather than to another, and thus recognizing him as her servant.

He had received permission from Frau Duroc to come early the next morning to drive with herself and her daughters through the town and take them over the Cathedral. A soft, clear sky and balmy air made a paradise of the quaint old narrow streets, through which they rambled at will, while Goethe's inexhaustible information and eloquence illustrated every object of interest that they visited. He explained to them the very curious effect given to the city just at this period by the half-executed plans to beautify it. If a crooked side of a street was to be straightened, one man would move forward to the appointed line, while his neighbors remained in their old positions; and thus the oddest projections and recesses were left. Rahel's awakened curiosity, gratified at every turn, and yet continually and artfully excited by Goethe with the promise of some fresh wonder, made her in some degree forget the mortifications of the previous evening and her desire to be once more at home. However, even here her restlessness

was apparent, and he was forced to exert his utmost ingenuity to amuse and entertain her.

Alide was quiet and subdued; she looked with wondering eyes at these unfamiliar scenes, and tried to realize the various lives and interests that encompassed her. By his side she was happy; in looking on his beloved and beautiful face, all other thoughts and emotions were absorbed in a flood of joy. But, as the hours slipped by, a sense of unrest and vague trouble gained upon her. When he spoke, though she was inspired and excited by his enthusiasms, she did not share them, often she could scarcely understand them. Her nature did not expand, like his, to embrace these various activities; it rather shrank within itself, suffocated for want of stimulus amidst this seething world of life, as the fish gasps for air in the midst of the rare element itself. She felt cramped, choked, belittled, in these noisy thoroughfares, these crowded lanes, beneath these towering edifices.

They alighted at the Cathedral, and entered the solemn sanctuary. The sudden transition from the brightness of the noonday streets to this tender twilight, the vast space of the inclosure, the exquisite beauty of the slender reed-like pillars supporting the lofty vault above, the awe-inspiring associations connected with the venerable Minster, caused a deep religious adoration to take entire possession of the simple girl's breast. She bowed her head and murmured to herself a childlike prayer.

He divined her emotions, though she could not guess his own, and he refrained from interrupting her silent communion. Rahel was chattering to the sacristan, who led her and Madame Duroc away from the others, down the long aisle.

"Alide," said Goethe, in a low voice, as she raised her eyes towards him, "I love you dearly when I see you thus, and yet you are not mine at such a time: you seem rapt away from me in some beautiful vision where I cannot follow. The gates of heaven are open for an instant, and then all is dark to me, until you return to earth, bringing upon your brow a reflection of the very glory of Paradise."

"Ah, Wolfgang!" she murmured, passionately, clasping her hands with the gesture that was habitual to her when deeply moved, "why is all dark to you? Why cannot you, who are so wise and so good, follow me into this celestial world, where simplicity and faith are all that are required to open wide the gates? Why shall not we twain, so closely united by sympathy and love, draw from the same sublime source our courage and our consolation? This is a subject that I have never before dared to mention, and yet now I am bold to speak. What more fitting time, what more sacred place, could we find than now and here to fall upon our knees together and unite in adoration of that blessed Lamb of God who died on Calvary for man?"

A hot flush mantled Goethe's face, and an expression of weariness almost amounting to pain clouded his brow, as he listened to Alide's enthusiasm. When she ceased, he took her clasped hands in both his own, and answered, very gently, "My dear little girl, you must not ask me to do this, you must not speak to me again in this way, for it can only give pain to both, showing between us a gulf that cannot be bridged. I love you; that must be enough. Upon these questions I have thought much, I have suffered much, I have undergone much that you can never understand; but now I am at peace. Do not be distressed for my sake; in the eyes of the beneficent Disposer of events our souls are at one."

She answered him with a bewildered, frightened glance. The solemn emphasis with which he had spoken forbade her continuing her impassioned appeal. Her eyes filled with tears. "A gulf between us!" she repeated, slowly. "Ah! that was my terror, and it has come. What will it grow to be when we are man and wife?"

"Alide! Alide!" interposed the shrill voice of Rahel, who now hastened to her sister's side, "come and see these beautiful holy relics the sacristan has been showing us. And then we are going to mount to the platform and see the view from the gallery."

How often these trivial intrusions occur at moments that seem like the crises of our lives! and

yet perhaps all had been said that either just then was able or ready to speak, and it may have been well for both that the peremptory demands of the hour forced them back to the actual world.

The panorama from the gallery above the Cathedral fully answered their expectations. The romantic city, the level-stretching meadows, the golden river with the noontide sunshine flashing upon it, the far-away mountains, but, above all, a just perceptible glimpse of Sesenheim, set Rahel fairly wild with delight, and struck them all with wondering admiration. This was the crowning pleasure of the day, and, after so much enjoyment and novelty, all were ready to return home and take some rest before they met again at dinner.

Alide was unusually pale, and confessed to feeling somewhat wearied, but the equable cheerfulness of her mind had already been restored to her by the unwonted tenderness and caressing attentions, with which Goethe sought to make her forget their painful conversation in the Minster.

CHAPTER XII.

HAMLET.

“WHEN we are man and wife.” These half-dozen words kept ringing in Goethe's ears and haunting persistently his brain. Each one seemed to fall separately upon his sense with its own little shock of surprise, though the idea they conveyed had been long, in a vague way, familiar to his mind. It would be idle to assert that he had drifted blindly to this end and that he now for the first time realized the significance and result of his passion. But it is true that he had never before framed this idea in words, nor imagined it as it now presented itself, an incongruous and inevitable fact. He who felt conscious of a superabundant vitality that was to expend itself in every phase of experience, he who awoke daily to a keener perception of the capabilities of a worthily-developed soul, he who fancied in his exalted hours that he heard the voices of art, science, and nature invoking him, their darling son,—in the recklessness of his extravagant youth he had fettered himself for the remainder of his days, he had cramped his wide-soaring flight to keep pace with the halting foot-

steps of a child ; at the threshold of a world that seemed all too narrow for his energies and capacities he had bound himself to tread the accustomed, decorous paths of a commonplace German citizen. For so long a time he had been in the habit of seeing all things through the medium of his passion, that it seemed as if a film or a glamour had been brushed suddenly from before his eyesight.

And yet it was no witchcraft that had made him find her marvelously pretty ; for so she looked at this moment as she advanced towards him, with her half-timid, half-confident air, and her free, graceful carriage, as though she stepped on grass and heath.

“ I have come to beg a favor of you, Wolfgang,” said she ; “ but you must promise beforehand to grant it.”

“ Naturally,” answered he, forcing a smile, “ that is the way you women always beg : first must come the consent, and then you humbly present your petition.” Then, seeing her discomfited expression, he added, with his usual spirit, “ But you know very well that I am always at your service, Alide. What is it now ? I am ready for anything you propose.”

“ Ah, now I recognize you again,” cried she. “ The girls are expecting some friends this evening, and they have sent me to beg you to entertain the company with reading aloud as you used to do for us at the parsonage.”

"Is that all?" asked he, good-humoredly. "Of course I will do my best to oblige you; only they must promise in their turn to be very attentive, and not to grow impatient if I require two or three hours to myself."

She led him joyfully among the family group, where he was thanked on all sides for his amiability, and Alide received her share of reflected admiration and homage from those who perceived her influence over him. As few of them were familiar with English literature, and he was in the period of his first enthusiasm for Shakspeare, he selected "Hamlet" as the subject of the evening's diversion. Never had Alide seen him more inspired than he appeared this night. He delivered every part with eloquent expression; but when he uttered the words of Hamlet himself he seemed to be in living reality the beautiful melancholy poet-prince, whose nobly-dowered, ill-balanced nature had been so "horribly shaken with thoughts beyond the reaches of his soul."

The attention of the whole company was strained to its utmost; they were enveloped by an atmosphere which they had never before breathed, and transported to scenes hitherto unimagined. Their ears were spell-bound by the thrilling modulations of that strangely sympathetic voice, which alone filled the room, no less with its gravest tones of awe and grief and its deepest murmurs of tenderness than with its irresistible force in the "very

torrent and tempest of passion." Alide sat directly opposite Goethe: throughout every act she remained motionless, with her eyes fixed upon his face, utterly unconscious of any other presence. And yet, though her attitude remained unchanged, and her hands lay quietly crossed in her lap, any one who had watched her attentively would have seen that she was a prey to a succession of various and powerful emotions. From time to time she sighed deeply, and a passing color tinged her cheeks.

"For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favor,
Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood;
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;
No more."

"No more but so?"

The blood fled from her eager face, her thin white fingers stirred convulsively, as she heard the wise, kind, chilling answer of Laertes:

"Think it no more.
For nature, crescent, does not grow alone
In thews and bulk; but, as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal."

A pathetic, bewildered expression clouded her countenance, until soon, forgetful of herself and suddenly responsive to some lofty thought, some

heroic passion, the light and color rippled again over brow and cheek, and a faint smile of irrepressible delight played upon her lips. When it was over, all crowded around Goethe with enthusiastic applause, while most of them added their thanks to Alide for having procured them so memorable an entertainment. In her graceful manner she did not deny herself the little pride of having shone through him.

There was much discussion at table about the play. This chance company of moderately-cultivated and ordinarily intelligent people were perhaps better able to form a correct and impartial judgment than if they had been a society of critics and Shakspeare's compatriots. Each one of Goethe's listeners heard the drama with a mind totally unbiased by any preconceived idea, and it broke upon them with all the freshness and beauty of a new work of art, the final result of the philosophy and aspiration of centuries. An Englishman would have been highly amused at the naïf admiration, the frank suggestions, the astonishment and enthusiasm of this foreign circle.

"Do you not find rather inconsistent with Hamlet's tender and sensitive temperament, Herr Goethe," suggested old Mr. Burkhardt, "the summary manner in which he disposes of the body of Polonius?"

"Nature, nature, sir!" cried Goethe; "nothing so natural as Shakspeare's men. Alas! how can

our age form a judgment as to what is natural; we who from youth upwards feel everything within us, and see everything in others, laced up and decorated? I am often ashamed before Shakspeare, for it happens that at the first glance I think to myself, I should have done differently; but soon I perceive that I am a poor sinner, that nature prophesies through Shakspeare, and that my men are soap-bubbles blown from romantic fancies."

"I must confess," said Anna, "that I do not know much about the poetry; but the interest of the story never flagged for a moment."

"And yet there seemed to be no action, properly so called," interposed a young man near Goethe; "but only a development of the strange character of Hamlet."

"You are right," answered Goethe; "Shakspeare's plots, as they are called, are no plots. All his plays turn upon the hidden point which no philosopher has yet seen and defined, in which the peculiarity of our *Ego*, the pretended freedom of our will, clashes with the necessary course of the whole."

"I think it is very unsatisfactory," said Rahel, in her blunt way, "not to know so much at the end of a play as whether the hero was really in love or not. Was Hamlet in love with Ophelia, Wolfgang?"

Alide started as though she herself had been the object of her sister's inquiry. There was a general

smile at the abruptness of the question, and Goethe himself seemed rather disconcerted.

“My clever little Mademoiselle Rahel,” said he, at last, “you have hit upon the most vexed question concerning our melancholy hero. I believe that scarcely any two readers of Shakspeare have precisely the same idea in regard to Hamlet’s feeling for Ophelia. In regard to hers for him, in spite of the exquisite delicacy and modesty of her character, there can, unfortunately for her, be no doubt.”

Why did Alide feel as if a loved hand had struck her a sudden blow? “But you do not answer me, —what is your opinion?” persisted Rahel.

“My opinion,” answered he, after a brief pause, “is that he sincerely loved her—before the opening of the play. She was the sweetheart of his boyhood, the companion of his hours of recreation. But from the moment that his capacities are disclosed to him by the revelation from another world, he is bound by the highest duty of man—that which he owes himself—to discard everything that can cramp or impede the development of his own nature, and the fulfilment of the sacred office to which he is called. The beauty and sweetness of Ophelia’s character cannot be exaggerated, yet she is no mate for Hamlet. He simply outgrows her; or rather, in ~~binding~~ binding himself to her, he had underestimated his’ own powers, and after these have been supernaturally revealed to him it is impossi-

ble for him to return to his earlier position. His heart remains true to her, but his whole intellectual nature has gone beyond her."

"On one point I cannot agree with you," answered the young man who had previously spoken: "I think Ophelia *was* the proper wife for Hamlet. Her character had all the grace, lightness, sentiment, and simplicity which his lacked, and only she, to my thinking, could have saved him, if he had but seen it in time, from the sombre madness and melancholy which ultimately destroyed him."

Goethe remained silent for a moment, and then replied, thoughtfully, "Perhaps it was Shakspeare's intention to suggest that. Such a result as you imagine is, unfortunately, one of those events that we never foresee betimes. Yes," he added, brightening again, "I return to what I said first,—that is nature. It would not have been natural if Hamlet could have studied the complications of his destiny with as clear a mind as the poet. It is pleasant to think that Shakspeare was mistaken, that we should have been nobler and truer than Hamlet, but I am afraid he shows us only too plainly how each one of us would have treated that 'Rose of May,' if we had been in Hamlet's position."

To all present, save one, this conversation appeared no more than the most indifferent criticism of an abstract subject. Alide felt her heart like lead in her bosom; her head burned and throbbed, her hands, by turns icy cold and feverishly hot, trem-

bled. She was possessed by the illusion that it was she who was the subject of the cold comments or the galling compassion of all around her. She breathed more freely when the topic of Hamlet was finally dismissed, and when the company dispersed she had gradually regained her outward composure.

Goethe was, as usual, the last to take his leave. While he was bidding good-night to the other members of the family, Alide remained apart, seated by the table where he had read. When he came towards her, the devoted girl forgot her own trouble the moment her eyes fell upon his altered face. The color had faded from his cheeks, his eyes were sunken and haggard, and a strange contraction of the muscles of his forehead gave him a distressed and wearied expression which she had never seen before.

"My darling, what is the matter with you?" whispered she, in alarm, with the tenderness of voice and manner which she was accustomed to receive from him. "You have done too much this evening,—you are over-fatigued,—you are ill. Wolfgang, what is it?" And she took his large, shapely hand caressingly between her two little cold palms.

"Do not be foolish, sweetheart," said he, forcing a smile. "Have you never seen me tired before? A night's sleep will bring me up again. Meanwhile, do you sleep sweetly and dream of other

things." He kissed her hurriedly for good-night. "Till to-morrow!" he cried, in a cheerful voice, and in a moment he was out of the house. He, on his part, had not remarked the icy chill of those affectionate hands that pressed his own, the unnatural brilliancy of the dilated eyes, the crimson spot of fever that glowed on either cheek, and the burning heat of the smooth white forehead which his lips had lightly touched. It was Madame Duroc who perceived, with a terrible sensation of oppression and anxiety, the unusual appearance of her child, and yet dared not express her sympathy by the slightest emphasis of affection. She felt that whatever trouble Alide was enduring now must be borne alone, and if it were not to pass away its solace must be left to a later period. All night the pious mother was awake, constantly invoking the blessing of Heaven upon the dear young head. She knew that the child of her heart, ill, helpless, and alone, was for the first time learning to suffer.

When Goethe hurried from the Burkhardts' home, there was a tumult in his brain, a heat and fever in his blood, a lassitude in his limbs, which he did not remember to have experienced before. A night's sleep would restore him, he had assured Alide; but when he issued into the soft night-air he said to himself that this was better than to toss uncomfortably upon his pillow, for in his nervously-excited condition sleep was an impossibility. It was past midnight, and the streets

were silent and black with shadows, relieved only by the white splendor of the moon that floated high above the house-tops. He walked at a rapid pace, but not in the direction of his lodging. Contrary to his usual habit, he took no note of the beauty of the night, and the quiet, restful appearance of the sleeping town. Overcome by poignant regrets, gloomy self-reproaches, and morose imaginings of the future, he yielded to the influence of a morbid despair. He saw himself faithless to the highest responsibilities of his life. On one side his fate called out, summoning him to an austere and lofty career, to the noblest achievements and the purest rewards; on the other, a clinging, affectionate child held him to the earth, fettered, cramped, and bound with chains of flowers. What was he doing with his youth? To whom was he about to sacrifice the convictions, the activity, of his richest and strongest years of manhood? And yet, whenever the image of that beautiful young face, ennobled as it was by a pure and deep passion, formed itself upon his brain, he felt his heart beat faster and the old yearning and unrest fill his bosom. At that moment all was dark within him,—whether he truly loved, or whether he yielded to a weak, ephemeral fancy; whether he himself was the Goethe of his imagination, or merely an ordinary foolish and capricious young man, swayed entirely by insane ambition and fantastic illusions. He raised his head, and, with a passionate movement, clasped

his hands, extended them wide, and let them drop by his sides, in a mute appeal to the mysterious forces of night. He had unconsciously walked towards the river, and the unexpected sight of the smooth black stream with its glittering reflections, and of the immense reach of star-sprinkled sky above, holding in its pale depths the bright, benign face of the moon, awakened him at once from the sombre unreality of his reverie to the beautiful actual world. The exquisite aspect of the June night seemed almost to give a direct answer to the cry of his agitated soul. Sweet and holy influences appeared to descend from those remote heavens upon his head, which he bared as if in prayer. Like the touch of his mother's hand the fitful yet indescribably gentle whiffs of breeze passed caressingly over his brow. He did not try to account for the sudden serenity which filled his breast after its recent turmoil and fever. This was true rest, he said to himself, this conscious repose, so different from the brutish oblivion of sleep. And yet, as the first streaks of dawn broke over the river, he was aware of an aching weariness in his limbs and a chill throughout his frame. He felt as one who has been scourged; his eyes burned, his hands trembled. With a painful effort he hurried to his lodging, flung himself, sick and shivering, upon his bed, and was immediately possessed by the profound sleep of utter exhaustion.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CLOUDS GATHER.

ALIDE awoke early, after an unrefreshing night disturbed by exaggerated dreams. At the hour that Goethe returned to his room, she rose and watched from her window the break of day. Even over the city streets the slow, majestic approach of morning brought its accustomed encouragement to her soul. Distressing as her sleep had seemed, it had nevertheless sufficed to restore the even flow of her blood. She recalled with astonishment her gloomy presentiments of the preceding evening, and the absurd fancy of identifying herself with Ophelia. “‘Till to-morrow!’ were his last cheerful words,” she thought; “and to-morrow has already come.” And a smile of tranquil joy broke upon her face as she raised her eyes and beheld the subdued light and delicate colors of the morning sky. A little breeze from over the river blew softly on her cheeks. At this moment of sacred expectancy just preceding the splendor of a new day, her heart was filled with pious gratitude and adoration.

She was startled from her reverie by the voice of her sister, who turned restlessly in the bed. "Alide, what are you doing so early by the open window?"

"I am at my matins," answered Alide. "Are you sleepy, Rahel?" she asked, advancing towards the bed. "Or do you care to get up with me and look at this beautiful sunrise?"

"No, I am not sleepy," replied Rahel, rising, with flushed cheeks and bright wide eyes. "I have been watching you a long time. You seemed so happy, I wondered what you could be thinking about. I had something to tell you, but I would not interrupt you. Were you really at your prayers?—you were not on your knees."

"I scarcely know myself, sister," answered Alide, with a laugh and a slight blush. "I was very peaceful and happy just then, and yet I could hardly tell you what I was thinking about. Come, put a shawl about your shoulders, and you can tell me in the window all you have to say."

"Well, I am tired enough of these hot pillows," said Rahel, who had slept like a tired child all night. And, drawing about her her little, loose white gown, she followed her sister to the window.

The city was still wrapped in a tender shadow, and the sky full of color, but without a gleam of radiance. In a moment, and as if unexpectedly, the clear sunbeams darted above the horizon, glistening over roofs and steeples, and as suddenly sprang

into relief against the blue background the illuminated spire of Strasburg Cathedral. Rahel gave a little sigh. The sunlight fell into the room and dazzled their eyes. She closed the *jalousies* with an impatient movement, and shut out the bright picture of morning. "Yes, it is beautiful," said she; "but it only makes me think the more of morning over the meadows and mountains at home. Oh, Alide, I am so unhappy here!" And, covering her face with her hands, she burst into tears.

Alide looked at her in surprise, and tried to calm her. "Yes," continued Rahel, when she had recovered sufficient composure to speak; "I have fought against it long enough. I can endure it no longer. Everything I do turns out to be a blunder. I sit among these fine ladies dumb and awkward as a peasant. I do not dress nor talk like them, nor belong to their world. When I am with Anna, I ask myself a hundred times a day what it is that puts her above me, that makes me feel like an ignorant child in her presence. She is no older than I am, she is not pretty, she is not clever, and I do not think she is kind. She is so sweet and gracious to every one's face, and yet she is spiteful enough behind their back sometimes. No, I could never be like her. And yet Gretchen is worse, for she mortifies me, and laughs at my mistakes, and makes them seem so droll to everybody else. Oh, Alide, are you not ready to go home?"

"Surely our going home does not depend upon

me," said Alide. "I never suspected you were so unhappy. I will go whenever you please,—tomorrow, or Thursday. What day shall we say?"

"Do you really promise to go so soon?" cried Rahel, eagerly. "Of course it depends upon you. Mamma told me in advance that she wished to wait, for it could not be long, until you and Wolfgang had made some definite arrangement, had settled the day of your marriage at least. What will she say when she knows I have forced you home so soon? Am I not selfish and vain and—"

"Hush, Rahel," interposed Alide, gently; "you are nothing of the kind. You and mamma and all the rest are only too good to me. But no one need think that it is you who persuade me to leave: I am quite ready myself to go."

"But is it indeed too soon?" asked Rahel, remorsefully. "Have you decided upon anything? When shall you be married, Alide?"

"Oh, as to that, never mind," said Alide, with confusion. "We can arrange that at the parsonage as well as we could here, where there is always a certain constraint. But you, at any rate, need not suffer any longer."

Rahel kissed her sister impetuously, and cried, "Dear little Baby, you have grown older and wiser than I." And then, with a free heart once more, she confided to Alide her hopes and plans for her own wedding, which was to take place early in the following autumn.

She was quite like the Rahel of Sesenheim again, cheerful, merry, and talkative, when she appeared among the Burkhardt family. But Alide was thoughtful and abstracted: her sister's confession as to the real object of their visit awoke her somewhat roughly to a sense of the actual demands of her position. She could not but acknowledge to herself that she was no nearer a definite agreement with Goethe, concerning their mutual prospects, than the day she had first seen him; and in the eyes of the world they were betrothed. But nothing was to be gained by remaining in Strasburg; she felt a sincere compassion for her sister's vexations and homesickness, and was glad for her sake to leave. She did not dare to ask whether she herself were happy here; she would not have confessed in her inmost thoughts that the presence of Goethe was not all-sufficing for her; but she was conscious of an unrest and oppression ever since she had been in the city, which she attributed to the novelty and uncongeniality of town-life.

She was more impatient than usual for the hour of Goethe's accustomed visit. Punctually at one o'clock he was in the habit of presenting himself daily at the Burkhardts' house, and they generally passed the remainder of the day together. Perhaps when she told him so unexpectedly that she must leave Strasburg, he would come to some decision.

The morning passed slowly and quietly. At noon some visitors were announced, and the Duroc girls

were called to receive them with their cousins. Alide's picturesque white skirt and bodice displayed to perfection the grace and symmetry of her form; a silver comb fastened above her stately little head the loose twists of her auburn braids. Her face was transparently pale, and her eyes had the languid, drooping expression produced by a night of insufficient sleep. The strangers were charmed with her, and when the clock struck one they showed no intention of taking their leave. Her answers became more and more brief and abstracted; her eyes wandered continually to the door, which did not open; she grew restless and alarmed.

"Will you not, my dear?" were the words, uttered in a coaxing tone, that startled her from her reverie, and she found that she was expected to sing.

"One of the genuine Volkslieder, cousin," said Anna.

It was such a relief to Alide to know what they were talking about, that she rose willingly to go to the harpsichord. Who does not know the rapidly-succeeding emotions of vexation, uneasiness, anxiety, and fear in waiting beyond the appointed time for one who is dear to us? She had sufficient control over her voice to intone some of her Alsatian ballads; the words came mechanically to her lips, but all the time she was repeating to herself, "Why has he not let me know? If anything should happen to him! My

darling, how harassed he looked last evening!" Before she had finished, the clock struck two; her heart beat high and loud in her breast. They pressed her for more, but she answered, in her simple, child-like way, "Please forgive me; I cannot sing any more just now."

"We are afraid it affects her chest, sometimes," said her mother; "she is so easily tired."

At last, to Alide's indescribable relief, the visit was brought to an end. It was nearly three o'clock: the one thought uppermost in her mind, that Wolfgang was ill, gained strength until it became a terrible certainty. All day her suspense was prolonged, and she was obliged to take part in the accustomed occupations and conversations of the household, and, moreover, to keep constantly on her guard, lest her agitation should be remarked. How could she wait until to-morrow? how could she lie motionless by her sister's side through the interminable hours of the night, and endure this intolerable distress and uncertainty?

Early in the evening a note was handed to her: she hurried to her room, dreading lest she should lose control over herself by a confirmation of her fears or a too sudden reaction of joy. With trembling fingers she broke the seal, and read:

"MY DARLING,—I cannot be with you till to-morrow. I laughed at your fears last evening, but nevertheless my little girl was right, as she always

is. This morning I found myself suffering, and only a day in the open air and a wild ride on horseback have made me myself again. I looked forward to seeing you this evening, but an old fellow-student of Leipsic, who is passing through Strasburg to-day, has unexpectedly turned up at my lodgings, and, of course, is with me for the night. I must find patience till to-morrow. Shall we not meet to-night in our dreams? I believe it, for my heart is always with you. Sleep well, and believe in the love of your own

“GOETHE.”

The reaction came, but it was not one of joy. She let the note slip from her fingers, and, covering her face with her hands, burst into tears.

CHAPTER XIV.

A STRANGE INTERVIEW.

EARLY on the following morning Alide left the house alone. Her grave, preoccupied air, her firm, self-confident carriage, no less than her bourgeois attire, were sufficient protection for her in the city streets. She directed her steps towards the Cathedral, walking as securely and fearlessly as though she were in the meadows at home. She was sick at heart, faint and terrified at the shadow which she foresaw about to fall upon her life, and she had need of solemn meditation and prayer. It was not the hour of service, but the organ was playing, and there were a few worshipers scattered among the aisles. Not far from the entrance knelt a woman in mourning, her face buried in her hands, and her form occasionally convulsed by stifled sobs. Alide could not fail to see her, and a sharp pang of pity smote her heart; but the stranger's grief was sacred, and at that moment beyond her compassion, and, averting her eyes, she glanced up at the altar, bowed her head meekly, folded her hands upon her breast, and sank down upon her knees.

What a throng of powerful emotions filled her

heart to bursting and sent the hot tears streaming from her eyes! Could that terrible nightmare be the end of her beautiful dream? With all her might she strove to put the evil thought away from her; she denied it utterly, she tried to stifle it by directing her mind to the contemplation of things holy and eternal. This was the source whence she had never yet failed to draw serenity and courage, and to-day again she succeeded insomuch that when she rose to leave the Minster she was once more at peace. As she walked slowly down the long aisle, she was startled by seeing that the mourner whom she had remarked on entering had fallen from her kneeling posture and was lying motionless with her face downward. She advanced towards her and touched her gently on the shoulder. The woman did not move. "Mein Gott! if she be dead!" thought Alide, in affright, and looked around for help; but there was nobody near, and she did not dare to profane the sacred quiet of the place by a cry or a call. She stooped over the prostrate figure, disencumbered the head from the heavy folds of the veil, and with an effort upraised the face. It was that of a woman scarcely older than herself, of a strange, severe beauty, and its deathly pallor was heightened by the intense blackness of the thick masses of hair that waved over the forehead.

"Poor thing! but it is only a faint," said Alide to herself, as she perceived the slight rise and fall

of the woman's chest; and, gently leaning the passive form against a column, she hastened away to beg the assistance of the sacristan. With his aid she gradually succeeded in restoring life to the sick woman, who stirred, opened her closely-locked lips, and raised her large, dark eyes with a bewildered expression. Alide spoke to her, and offered her some water to drink.

"You have not been well, my friend," said she: "are you strong enough now to let us help you out of the church, where you can breathe some fresh air?"

The woman looked at her with a grateful expression, but did not answer; she drank the water which Alide held out to her, and then said, in a low voice, as if she did not expect to be understood, "*Je ne comprends pas*," and made an effort to rise to her feet.

"Ah, she is a foreigner," grumbled the sacristan. "What is to be done, *Fräulein*?"

"That is nothing; I will make her understand," replied Alide; and she repeated in French what she had already said. She herself, as her name betokened, was of French descent, and the pastor had instructed his children in that language, which they spoke with rare sweetness and precision.

The stranger looked at her in surprise, and a smile of satisfaction lit up her austere features. "Ah, how good it is to hear one's own language like that!" said she. "You are an angel, *mademoi-*

selle. Yes, I am quite strong enough, if this good man will lend me his arm to go into the air. That is what I need. This hot building stifled me; I thought the walls were closing in upon me, I felt myself fall, and then—nothing! Did I cry out? where did you come from? how did you find me?"

She had a wild, almost fierce look in her large eyes, and her voice sounded rather too loud to Alide for the sacred edifice.

"Never mind that now, my friend," answered she: "I will tell you all when we get outside. Only now try to walk a step."

They helped her to her feet, and, leaning heavily on the sacristan's arm, she succeeded in reaching the vestry-room. In spite of her weakness, she absolutely refused to take Alide's hand to enable her to walk, but nevertheless begged her to sit with her a little while until she felt able to go into the street again. The window was open, and the fresh air soon revived her. She sat without speaking, drinking in the soft summer breeze, with her eyes fixed upon the sky. Great tears quivered upon her lashes, but did not fall. Alide had never seen anything more beautiful and more melancholy than this strange face. The features were regular in outline, and severe to sternness, and yet the expression was that of a passionate nature, owing to the sensuous effect of heavy eyebrows that met over the nose, the peculiar glance of the eyes, and the bold appearance given to the whole face by the

arrangement of the hair, which was parted at the side, overshadowing with its luxuriance the square forehead. If she had not been so sad, Alide would almost have experienced a sensation of fear. As it was, her tender heart was overflowing with a vast pity; she wondered what the stranger's trouble was, and if it could not be alleviated. But no,—those black mourning robes proved too plainly a trouble that could know no compensation on earth. Thank God, she had been spared an affliction like that! If Wolfgang had died,—no, she could not endure the thought. And to think that this morning she had been miserable, because for a single day he had not cherished her with his wonted devotion! Now she was brought in the presence of grief, and what a mockery it made of her imaginary trouble! Who could be gentle enough to one who had suffered as this poor girl? Actuated by a sudden strong impulse of sympathy and tenderness, Alide stood up by the stranger's side, and, bending over her, kissed her forehead. The woman started and looked at her in amazement; the tears that had stood in her eyes gathered and streamed down her pale cheeks.

“You are an angel of heaven!” she cried. “I am not worthy to touch your pure, kind hand, and you do not hesitate to kiss my brow. But do not be afraid,” she added, drawing back; “I will not harm you, I will not come near you; but the good God will let me breathe for a little while the atmosphere

of one so pure and so gentle, and only He knows how I have suffered." And, once more averting her head, she leaned against the window and looked up at the sky.

Alide was indeed a little frightened, but her compassion overpowered all other feelings, and, advancing again, she said, "Are you not my sister in Christ? You cannot harm me, my poor girl, but I may help you. You have been ill just now, and you must not excite yourself like this. Sit down by my side, and perhaps you will grow calmer."

The woman dropped upon her knees before Alide, buried her head in the young girl's lap, and sobbed aloud. For a long time Alide talked to her as wisely as she knew, about the blessed consolations of a faith that promised everlasting mercy to the repentant sinner. It was not her words, which were the ordinary commonplaces of every priest and parson, but it was the earnest conviction, the simple piety, and, more than all, the unexampled kindness and sympathy, that softened and quieted the poor, fallen creature at her feet. She listened as if in a dream of peace to this gentle young girl, who seemed to her a living saint; but she did not confess herself: she felt that it would have been a wrong to that innocent, candid soul. At last they separated; the stranger insisted that she was quite able to find her way home alone, and she would not hear of Alide's taking a step with her in the

street. Again and again she thanked her for her angelic kindness, and kissed reverently and humbly the hand which Alide offered her at parting. "May I ask you one thing more, mademoiselle?" she said, timidly, after taking a last, long look at the noble, delicate face before her. "Your name?"

"Alide Duroc. And yours, that I may pray for you?"

"Lucinda."

CHAPTER XV.

DRIFTING APART.

IN returning to the Burkhardts' house, Alide felt herself under the influence of a powerful excitement. Her interview with Lucinda had entirely overshadowed her personal trouble, and had revealed to her an abyss of suffering and sin hitherto inconceivable to her joyous, innocent temperament. After a glimpse of such desolation and self-abasement, the recollection of her own happy home, and of the love which encompassed and cherished her, was refreshing as the clear air and sunlight to one who issues from a dungeon. She reproached herself with humility for her recent bitter thoughts; in everything Wolfgang had done she saw now an additional tenderness and consideration. He had not written to her until he could tell her he was well, and then it was only to speak lightly of past suffering; and, instead of understanding and rejoicing, what unjust suspicions had she harbored against him! She longed to see him, to confess her wrong, and ask forgiveness, and to hear him talk once more, in his own wise, generous way, of the duties and compensations of life, in order to

reconcile her to her new knowledge of evil. Her whole heart was softened and agitated, and needed to expand in affection and to be quieted by the voice of love.

When she reached the house, Goethe had already arrived. He had come earlier than usual, and was seated in the drawing-room with Madame Burkhardt and her daughter. Alide's accustomed delight at his presence was mingled with disappointment, for she must meet him with forced composure, and continue to repress the emotions which swelled her heart. She found him in high spirits, recounting to her aunt and cousin some droll reminiscences of his student-life at Leipzig, recalled, no doubt, by the visit he had received the previous evening. The old lady and Anna had apparently been enjoying the heartiest laughter, and he himself was beyond measure gay and animated.

"Good-morning, dear friend," he cried, as he rose to greet Alide, taking one of her hands between his own and kissing it lightly. "You ran away from us early; but you have come in time to join us in the pleasantest conversation."

His merry tone jarred harshly upon Alide's mood, but, forcing herself to respond, she answered, with her natural cheerfulness, "I am glad I am not too late. I have stayed longer than I intended at the Cathedral. But tell me first, Wolfgang, are you well to-day?"

"Do I look like an invalid?" said he, turning towards her his laughing face flushed with brilliant color. "I think it must have been a disagreeable dream that I was ill for a half-dozen hours or so," he added, hurriedly; "I cannot believe it to-day. I have been telling Madame Burkhardt and Fräulein Anna of my visitor last evening,—an old fellow-student, Alide,—and it has led me back into I know not what foolish recollections of boyhood."

"Hear the lad! how he talks of his boyhood, as if he were a grandfather!" cried Madame Burkhardt; "and I do not believe it is five years back."

"You are not far wrong," he replied, with a laugh: "my Leipsic days were just six years ago. But I do not parcel out my life in years; I know that I have lived fast and developed quickly, and I know, too, how young I am by the great world-clock, and how much I have to do. No, Madame Burkhardt," he continued, with his former lightness, "indulgent as you are, you would not have tolerated the volatile, overbearing, untamed boor that I was then." And he began again to narrate an incident of that period. He was in his liveliest vein to-day, affording so much entertainment to his listeners that Alide saw little chance of a quiet interview with him. And indeed she almost ceased to desire it as the hour passed by: she could not have uttered to him in his present mood the grave words that had been upon her lips. At last, however, Madame Burkhardt withdrew, after making

him promise to dine with them, that she might see him again; and shortly after, Anna discreetly followed her.

"You little runaway!" cried he, as soon as he found himself alone with Alide. "You were cruel enough to punish me for my misfortune yesterday, —was I not punished enough?"

She looked at him in mute reproach. How was it possible to imagine an act of coquetry between herself and him? He saw that he had wounded her, and tried to repair his mistake.

"If I had but known in time that you cared to go so early to the Cathedral, I should have loved to ramble over it again with you. I believe, Alide, if you were to dwell any length of time in Strasburg, the constant presence of that noble monument would gradually bring you into sympathy with the infinite world that opens to the artist's mind. Do you know that some of the grandest of those colossal statues set in the walls are the work of a woman,—Sabina von Steinbach, the daughter of Erwin?"

What was the matter with him to-day? He spoke with evident constraint, and every word he said seemed to force Alide and himself further apart.

"Yes?" answered she, absently. "I did not go there this morning to admire the architecture. And I am not going to dwell any length of time in Strasburg, either," she continued, with a quiet

smile. "Do you know that we are going home to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" cried Goethe, springing from his seat. "But you have only just arrived. And our walks, our river-excursions, our drives, all the pleasure that we promised ourselves together! What is the meaning of this sudden determination?"

She explained to him in a few words the discomfort and humiliation of her sister's position.

"Was that all?" he thought, with a sigh of relief, and he looked quickly and searchingly into Alide's ingenuous face. "I cannot dispute it," answered he: "poor Rahel has been miserably restless and unhappy here; the situation was a novel one for her, and its exactions have chafed terribly her wild spirit. But it is the more admirable how you, Alide, have fitted yourself to each new condition; everywhere you seem free as a bird in the branches."

"Wherever you are, Wolfgang, I am content," she replied, simply.

For a moment he did not speak; then, abruptly looking her full in the face, he pressed her hand warmly.

"You are a good girl, Alide," he said, and began to pace the room, with his eyes cast to the ground.

Alide felt emboldened by his evident agitation to put forward the subject nearest her heart.

"And why, Wolfgang," she began, timidly, "should I remain longer in the city? If mamma and Rahel are happier at home, why should my

pleasure detain them? Whither is our present life leading,—and for what are we waiting?” She paused, with her heart in her throat.

“For what are we waiting, indeed?” repeated he, as if to himself, passing his hand over his brow and never stopping in his walk. “My youth is slipping away from me,—the precious years of activity that I had resolved to dedicate to high and serious thought and indefatigable labor. What wild yet glorious visions, what earnest purposes, did not Breitskopf recall to me last night! And is life to charm me also from my convictions, like so many other useless, indolent creatures who loiter by the way and are swept into annihilation by the storm and stress of time? How much longer am I to remain a novice and a pupil?—to squander the priceless gifts of manhood in prattling, and trifling, and dilatory self-indulgence? Everything recalls me to myself: last night it was Breitskopf who startled me by asking what I had done, and what I was doing. I remained dumb and ashamed. A stroke on a canvas, the jingle of a sonnet, a fantastic fairy-tale, are those the work of a man? And at such a moment, too,—when old faiths are passing away, old superstitions are discarded, old prejudices are abandoned, and all Germany in an attitude of expectation awaits the voice that will animate and inspire the souls of her youth.”

He paused, and stood before Alide. How completely they failed to understand each other! Was

that the response he should have given to her affectionate appeal? and what words had she to offer the need of his spirit? How was she fitted to enter with sympathy and intelligence into the world of his imagination? Her heart was like a stone within her; she saw him gradually passing beyond her narrow sphere into a realm where she could neither meet nor follow him.

He forced himself back from his wild reverie, and quieted himself by talking of her, questioning her again about her departure, and interesting himself in all that concerned her. He wished to accompany her the following day to Drusenheim, where the pastor was to meet his family, but Alide said she would prefer to bid him farewell here, rather than take the chance of parting before strangers at the inn; and as the driver of the diligence had been an old servant of her father's, and all the country-folk knew the Durocs, she had not the slightest fear of returning as she had come. Throughout the remainder of the day they were together, but, whether in the midst of the family group or apart from all, their conversation kept a uniform tone: they did not speak from heart to heart again.

Who has not seen a summer cloud that hangs apparently motionless become, through imperceptible changes, even while the eye is fastened upon it, something other than it was, and slowly dissolve and vanish in the bright ether?

CHAPTER XVI.

PARTING.

BOTH Goethe and Alide looked forward with dread to the separation on the morrow ; but when it came it was no tragic farewell. At the last moment they found themselves in the midst of the family, where cheerful and affectionate embraces were exchanged, as befitted friends who were separating for a brief term and who would still be but a short distance apart. There was even much merriment among them in the confusion of good-byes. They were all to meet in the autumn at latest for Rahel's wedding, and in the meantime frequent visits to the parsonage were promised by the younger Burkhardts. As for Goethe, he said he would be with them in a week, if he could snatch a day ; and Rahel, who was in high spirits, refused to bid him good-by, in order to insure his coming.

Alide was calm and quiet, and preserved her ordinary appearance and demeanor. All the cheerfulness around her did not deceive her unerring intuitions. " This is the end," she kept repeating mechanically to herself. She was in one of those moods when the necessity of a supreme effort

strings the nerves to their utmost tension. She could have laughed as naturally as the rest; she could utter careless words to her kinsfolk, yes, to Wolfgang himself; she could think with a curious accuracy of every detail of their departure and journey; she observed with more than her usual keenness everything around her, whether ludicrous or serious. And all the time there was a leaden weight upon her brain, and she felt as if her heart and soul had been eaten out of her.

The first sensation which Goethe experienced when the diligence rolled away was one of relief, as if of restored freedom; but the next moment he was horrified at his own cowardice. The veil was torn from before him, and he saw clearly the position into which he had drifted. It was not the first time that his susceptible, undisciplined nature had led him into a hasty attachment which could occasion only discord and misery. To his shame he confessed it, but in this case he had bound himself to one so pure and so lovely that to free himself would be dishonor. And yet this affectionate child did not respond in any degree to the demands of his insatiable spirit: his fancy and his sense had been attracted, but the depths of his being had not been stirred. As she herself had said, "If there were a gulf between them now, what would it grow to be when they were man and wife!" His imagination pictured to him in the most forcible colors the hideous dreariness and the ever-increasing un-

happiness of a marriage of disparity, where neither the convictions nor the sentiments of man and wife were in harmony. And this was what he must awaken to,—too late, too late! for he could not but acknowledge that now, at whatever sacrifice, he must stand firm. There could no longer be any self-delusion with regard to a higher duty to his art, to the responsibilities of a vocation for which ordinary men were not fitted: his duty to himself had become one with his duty to her.

The more he reflected upon his situation, the more inevitable did this necessity appear to him, and the more hopelessly entangled became the various threads of his life. He plunged into gayety to drown his tormenting thoughts; he devoted himself feverishly to work. After a day's uninterrupted study he would pass the better part of the night in dissipation or dancing. "If you could but see me," he wrote to a friend; "my whole being was sunk in dancing. And yet could I but say I am happy,—that would be better than all. 'Who is it can say, I am at the worst?' says Edgar. That is some comfort, dear friend. My heart is like a weathercock when a storm is rising and the gusts are changeable. All is not clear in my soul. I am too curiously awake not to feel that I grasp at shadows. And yet—to-morrow at seven my horse is saddled, and then adieu!"

The next morning he was on the road to Sesenheim. It was two weeks later than the date of his

promised visit, but he had previously lost so much time, and he was so soon to take his degree, that it had been impossible for him to leave the city. He had formed his resolution, and he was about to put an end to all vacillations, and to the torture of self-reproach and unmanly regrets, by confronting and accepting his fate. He galloped along the familiar road in the early sunshine with a concentrated bitterness at heart. This lover who rode at such a wild pace to rejoin his betrothed and to bid her name the day of their union was saying farewell to his freedom at every moment as he advanced.

When he neared the parsonage, he saw in the garden a girl's figure bending to prop up the falling stem of a rose-bush. Her back was towards him, and her head was covered with her large, flat garden-hat. The noise of his horse's hoofs startled her, and she turned quickly: it was Rahel. Her face, which had regained its former child-like vivacity, beamed with delight as she recognized him. "At last!" she cried, and she rose and hastened towards him, dropping with a clatter on the gravel her garden-scissors and spool. "How glad I am to see you! but you are a naughty man to have made us wait so long. Oh, how happy they will all be to know you have come! Will you dismount here? Wait, and I will call Hans." And with a shrill little cry she summoned the servant to lead the horse to the stable; then, shaking Goethe warmly by the hand, she went with him into the

house, exclaiming, as she entered, "Papa! Alide! Mamma! Goethe has arrived!"

He followed her as one in a dream: yes, this was his family; here was his home; from to-day henceforward all this little circle was his own. In the library they found the pastor, who welcomed him with the same enthusiastic cordiality that Rahel had shown; and shortly after appeared Frau Duroc. Her manner, less demonstrative than theirs, was unchanged in its matronly dignity and kindness.

"And Alide?" asked Goethe, as soon as he had greeted them all and explained briefly the delay of his own visit.

"She has not been quite herself of late," answered the mother; "though she does not complain. She will be with us directly."

As she spoke, Alide entered the room. Seeing her thus after a separation, Goethe was for the first time conscious of the change that had taken place in her appearance since he had known her. She had developed into a beautiful, serious woman; her expression, no longer that of joyous unconsciousness, was almost melancholy in its thoughtful gravity. She must have been ill during the last three weeks, for her face had grown noticeably thinner, and had lost entirely its glowing bloom of color, while her large, brilliant eyes were hollow and sunken in their orbits and encircled by ominous lines. At this moment, however, a tranquil

cheerfulness animated her countenance as she advanced towards Goethe with her usual serene smile. She gave him her hand to kiss, and welcomed him kindly, but with a certain reserve in her manner. She questioned him about himself, his health, his vocations, his approaching examination, everything that interested him, but shrank from all allusion to herself. She denied emphatically that she had been suffering or ill since her return home, and even in doing so a natural little laugh and a momentary flush of color tended to confirm her words.

In a short time the thread of Goethe's intercourse with the family seemed resumed where it had last been dropped. The pastor, who entertained an extravagant admiration and affection for him, found no end of subjects on which to converse, and even to consult, with his young friend. Rahel was once more lively and talkative, and Alide, though unusually taciturn, seemed as cheerful as ever in Goethe's presence. It was not till after dinner that he found himself alone with her.

"Alide, I must say a word to you before I return to Strasburg," he began, hurriedly. "Had we not better go to your arbor?"

An almost imperceptible shudder ran through her frame. "As you please, Goethe," she answered; "though I scarcely think we should be interrupted here."

She had not yet called him Wolfgang in her old

child-like, affectionate tone. She went to fetch her hat, and in a few moments they were out of the house together, walking through the fields.

"Before we part again, Alide," said Goethe, in a dry, husky voice, "we must put an end to this unsettled life, which places us both in a false position and creates an unrest for the spirit that precludes all useful activity. We are both very young to marry, I know, and perhaps your parents will not find it fitting that you should leave them so early; but I have reflected, and I think it best that we should be together as soon as possible."

What a poor little stiff speech it was, contrasted with the ardor and fluency of his first passionate declaration! She listened quietly, retaining to the end the same steadfast, unmoved expression. They had reached the arbor, and they entered in silence and seated themselves side by side. It was greener and shadier than when they had first met there in the autumn; the golden lights that fell upon their two youthful figures were rarer, but not less brilliant. A blue July haze hung over the landscape.

"I have a confession to make to you, dear friend," said Alide. Her voice was low, even, and natural, save for a somewhat monotonous ring. "It will give you pain, you will think me heartless and weak and foolish, but some day you will thank me that I have spoken in season. A curious change has taken place in me since I returned from Strasburg. I was able to conceal from you, yes, even from

myself, how difficult that restricted conventional town-life was to me, but I was as happy as Rahel when it was brought to an end. To see papa once more, the dear old manse, the open meadows,—all this made my heart stir and leap as nothing had since I left them. I had not been at peace with myself in the city. Everything I had been accustomed to cherish seemed there of so little account. And even you, Goethe, your enthusiasms were not mine, your convictions were far different. Whenever you spoke of the Cathedral, I felt a shock and a pang. All the sacred mysteries of our faith, so inestimably precious to me, were naught to you. I was distressed by a thousand conflicting ideas and emotions, I who had been used to see all things simply and clearly. No, I was not happy there; but here I have regained my former contentment and tranquillity. You, dear friend, will advance on a brilliant, an unexampled career; but if I be drawn from my proper element I shall suffocate and die. Is it not better to part at the beginning of the roads, before they diverge too widely? I also have seen something of unhappy marriages. You are not the man, Goethe, to whom a woman should give herself with reserve and restrictions. If I cannot say, ‘Wherever you go, I will follow; for you I will sacrifice my parents, my home, my pursuits, my life,—and it will be no sacrifice, but a free and joyous gift,’—if I cannot say that, I know that I have no right to call myself your wife.”

She paused, but Goethe was so amazed and bewildered that he made no reply. He had listened to her in a sort of stupor, with his eyes fixed upon the prospect below him, of which he saw nothing. Alide had made her "confession" with as little sentiment as if she were reciting a studied part: her face was unnaturally white, her hands rested listlessly upon her straw hat, which she had taken off and laid upon her lap. But after she had finished speaking, in the moment of silence that ensued, the blood rushed into her cheeks, and a smile, as of the dawning of a new hope, kindled her whole countenance. Still, he neither spoke nor turned towards where she sat. The light died from her face, and a violent shudder ran through her frame; she raised her hand, passed it twice quickly over her brow and eyes, and then, almost involuntarily outstretching it towards Goethe, clasped his own, and, with a supplicating note in her voice strangely at variance with her cold words, she cried, "But, oh, Goethe! surely you will not withdraw from me your friendship?"

He started, and looked at her for the first time during their interview: her cheeks were still flushed, her eyes glittered with a peculiar light which he had never seen in them before. Something of his old tenderness of manner returned as he beheld the beautiful, agitated little face.

"You foolish child," he began, and kissed the icy hand that rested upon his own. "But no: I

have not the right to speak to you in this way. You are no child, but a noble, true-hearted woman. To speak the truth as you have done, Alide, simply and fearlessly, requires something heroic. But I will not abide by what you have said: perhaps you have not considered deeply enough your own feelings, perhaps you have judged hastily our mutual position. It is quite natural that you should experience pleasure in seeing your father and your home again, even after so short a separation. Your ideas are somewhat exalted, my child: it is not expected of any woman that she should give up the instincts of her heart, the tender associations of her childhood, even for the man she is to wed. But take time, and reflect again, Alide. I shall not be present to disturb your choice. At the end of a fortnight I will return, and then, if your feelings have changed, you will know that I am still and always your own."

"But they will not change," she answered, with a quiet smile, as she rose to her feet.

They left the arbor in silence, as they had entered, and returned to the house. On the way, however, she began to talk composedly of other things. She made him pluck for her a wild flower that grew on the edge of the brook, saying she had never remarked it before, and asking him its botanical name and genus. He, on his part, was so excited and confounded by what had taken place between them that he could not speak natu-

rally of anything. A burden had been lifted from his heart and his brain, but nevertheless he could not repress a feeling of indignation at seeing her so cold and indifferent. "To think that I was about to sacrifice myself for one so volatile as that!" he said to himself. Then, repeating unwittingly the very words that had occurred to her when they parted at Strasburg, he thought, "This is the end. Can it be that she really does not care?" And he looked at her keenly and scrutinizingly.

No, there was not a trace of passion or grief on that pale, serene face.

The fortnight passed for Goethe in a whirl of activity. A day or two after his visit to Sesenheim he took his degree, gaining his doctorate, and carrying the victory with honor over his worthy opponent. He made preparations at once for leaving Strasburg and returning to his father's home in Frankfort. But, much as the presence of Alide had troubled him of late, in her absence he could not cease to recall her myriad attractions and lovable qualities : at every turn he missed her gentle, affectionate companionship, her equable serenity, her tender, unobtrusive kindness for himself. He wrote to her several times, but, receiving no reply, he waited impatiently for the day of his return to the parsonage, when he was to bid farewell to her for months or forever, according to her own wish. Her silence, however, left him little doubt as to her final

decision. "Those were painful days," he wrote later, "of which I remember nothing. When I held out my hand to her from my horse, the tears were in her eyes, and I felt sad at heart."

All was over : she would never cease to think of him with grateful affection and esteem, but she could never be his.

CHAPTER XVII.

FREEDOM.

It would be difficult for a person of moderate emotions or well-disciplined temperament to conceive the thrilling sense of power and freedom with which Goethe started on his journey from Strasburg to Frankfort. Now at last the whole world was before him, and he was tied down by no bond of duty to the period of his immaturity: now he was free to develop all that he felt engendering and growing within him. Progress and activity,—with those two watchwords, what could he not dare and accomplish? He experienced, moreover, a purely animal sensation of delight in his liberty, as he traveled over the rich and beautiful country, reveling in the brilliant sunshine, the large air, and the sweet smells of the spacious fields. There was something contagious in the reckless exhilaration of his spirits, and all who met him were impressed by the spectacle of this handsome, happy youth, gifted with an organization of mind and body in which one could scarcely detect a flaw, and seeming to enjoy unbounded delight in the mere consciousness of existence.

Mentally and physically he was in a condition

of perfect health, and he was thus fitted to receive impressions which modified for the rest of his life his whole tone of thought. At Mannheim he saw in plaster, for the first time, some of the masterpieces of Greek art, which from that moment became for him the most beautiful type of the ideal. He made companions of all whom he met by the way: now it was a learned professor, now an enthusiastic artist, a handsome peasant-woman, a burly farmer, or a prosaic burgher. He could find entertainment in the society of all, or he could pass, with higher pleasure, hours of silence and solitude among the relics of the Greeks, or in the open meadows. At Mainz he fell in with a wandering harpist, and, as the lad was clever and honest-faced, nothing would serve but that he must be Goethe's minnesinger and his fellow-traveler for the rest of the journey, and accept the hospitality of his father's house in Frankfort. So these two odd companions fared merrily through the prosperous summer fields, without the shadow of a care between them; and during all their progress Goethe was so full of mad freaks and whims, and took such fantastic pleasure in quaint disguises, and the poor harpist was so sanguine and so elated, that it would have been hard to tell who of the happy pair was the poet and who was the beggar.

When Alide, after bidding farewell to Goethe, turned in from the sunny air which struck a chill

through her every bone and nerve, she succeeded with difficulty in mounting the stairs and reaching her room; but, as she entered, a faint, short cry escaped her, and she fell upon the floor. It was thus they discovered her, white as death, even to the lips, with no other sign of life than the just-perceptible pulsation of the heart. To their terror, they found it impossible to rouse her from her swoon: at times her fingers would stir, or she would slowly change the posture of an arm or a hand; but their beseeching, piteous glances of grief and affection were answered by no gleam of consciousness from her blank blue eyes, when the heavy lids were for a moment wearily raised.

They clad her in her night-dress and laid her on her bed, and through the changeless, unnatural quiet of the darkened days, and the oppressive, awful stillness of the creeping hours of night, they kept watch beside her pillow, awaiting in sickening suspense the signs of returning reason. She looked divinely peaceful in that mysterious trance: the fragile physical frame seemed utterly exhausted and as if broken, but so much the more ethereal was the spiritual calm that had settled upon the exquisite, restful face. Is it true, then, that life is the highest and the sweetest gift? Might not one hesitate to decide whether it were better to win back to earth this almost disembodied spirit, or rather thus quietly and painlessly to let her float into eternal repose?

But no such thoughts found entrance into the overwrought brain of the mother, who, with wide, dry eyes, was sitting now at midnight beside her darling's prostrate form. She was the last watcher left awake in the household: the pastor and his son, useless in the sick-room, had succumbed to fatigue and anxiety and retired to seek a few hours' forgetfulness. Rahel, her pale, troubled face still streaming with tears, lay, utterly worn out, fast asleep on a couch near Alide's bedside. Madame Duroc had sat for a long time motionless as Alide herself, never turning her tearless, aching eyes away from her unconscious child. Even now she suffered less through the realization of her own approaching loss than through her overpowering maternal pity for this passionate, broken young heart that had wrestled and endured alone. She had had bitter, wicked thoughts in her weary vigil: the poor, pious mother had been tempted to invoke curses upon the stranger who had wrecked this precious life and had bereaved her own declining years. Now she could no longer pray nor think; a dull despair had absorbed all her faculties.

Suddenly a change came upon the face of Alide; the serene expression was replaced by a slight contraction of the brows, as though she suffered pain; the lips, which had been relaxed almost into a smile, were drawn closely together, and her hands, that had rested crossed over her breast, fell by her sides.

"My child! my child!" cried Madame Duroc,

fancying that this was the very shadow of death darkening over her daughter's face; and, clasping her arms about Alide's neck, she raised her head from the pillow and strained it to her breast amid a passion of tears and caresses.

"What is the matter?" said Alide, in an almost inaudible voice.

In an instant Rahel also was by the bedside. "Mamma! mamma!" whispered she, "for God's sake, do not give way now!"

Madame Duroc, recalled to herself by the pathetically feeble tones of Alide, no less than by Rahel's appeal, was able to conquer her momentary weakness.

"Nothing, my darling," she answered, with sufficient composure. "You have had a long sleep; I was watching you, and I woke you just then from a painful dream."

"Is that all?" asked Alide, wearily, again closing her eyes. "But, mamma," she began in a little while, "you were mistaken. I was not dreaming at all. I have been only resting for a long time. Oh, how tired I was! Why did you wake me?"

Madame Duroc tried to avoid answering her, and to quiet her into a natural slumber. During several minutes Alide lay apparently at rest, but all at once she turned, thoroughly awake, towards the other side of the bed, where her sister sat. "Rahel," she asked, with the suspicious curiosity of the sick, "why are you here at this hour? Is it not late

night? What are you both watching me for? Am I ill?"

"No, sister," answered Rahel, soothingly. "You have been ill, but now you are going to be well. Will you drink this little glass of tea for us, and go to sleep again, Alide?"

"Why not?" asked Alide, like a child; and, swallowing the draught which Rahel gave her, she seemed to sink once more into unconsciousness.

But forgetfulness was no longer to be hers. As she lay with closed eyes, too tired to stir or speak, she lived over in her mind all the joy, the disappointment, the struggle, and the agony. Her whole frame ached with utter weariness, a dull, heavy pain oppressed her heart, and her brain felt on fire with the whirl of thoughts that wrought it into preternatural activity. If she could not find some relief from this internal fever, she felt that she should go mad. She raised her eyes and saw her mother and sister silently weeping; suddenly a yearning compassion opened the flood-gates of her heart, and she burst into tears.

"Oh, mamma, let me weep!" she cried, as her mother tried to soothe her, caressing her brow and tenderly kissing her burning eyelids. "It is almost as good as rest itself to be able to weep at last!"

When her paroxysm of grief passed over, she was almost lifeless with exhaustion. "I cannot even weep any more," said she; "and yet all is so sore about my heart. Everything seems dim and strange to me.

I think I am going to leave you. Rahel, come closer to me, by mamma, that I may see you both."

Her words were scarcely audible, and were continually interrupted by a dry, hard sob. They each held one of her cold, damp hands in theirs, kissing it and weeping over it.

"You must ask papa and Otto to come in and see me once more," she went on, with great effort. "But first, mamma, will you promise me, and you too, Rahel, before I go, to forgive *him*,—forgive him even in your thoughts?—for it is not he who was to blame: he was generous and true to the last; but it was not to be. I did not think this would be the end of all those happy days. But, believe me, it is not his fault. Tell me that you forgive him,—that you forgive me."

What could Madame Duroc answer in the anguish of such a moment, save that she would grant that touching prayer, for the sake of the very child who had been his victim? But the effort had been too much for Alide, and before her mother's words died in her ears she had relapsed into a swoon.

And yet that hour was not the last, it was only the crisis of Alide's existence. Slowly, gradually, and painfully they won her back to life. It was a colorless and joyless life enough; and nevertheless she learned that it could be endured, yes, even cherished, without the element of hope or the possibility of happiness. The tender devotion of those

around her made her accuse herself on her knees to Heaven, of basest ingratitude, if for a moment she succumbed to the hungry longing and pain of her heart and wished that she had been permitted to drift away from all trouble and desire. She learned the significance and the beauty of those divine words,—duty and resignation; and, as the slow time wore away, she even found that a quiet pleasure could steal into certain days and shed a subdued radiance over her sheltered, monotonous life. She found herself capable of a sympathy with the happiness of others, a calm and serious enjoyment of much that had formerly delighted her, and a pious satisfaction in the daily victory over her own heart.

There was no need for her to retire behind the grated walls of a convent. Hers were the constant chastity, the exalted faith, the meek submission of the nun; but she found ample scope for the exercise of all womanly virtue among those whose love had rescued her from the grave, in her own pastoral home, where on every side she came in personal contact with human trouble and human joy.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LETTERS.

A FEW weeks after Goethe's arrival in Frankfort he wrote the following letter to Alide :

“FRANKFORT-ON-THE-MAIN, Sept. 25, 1771.

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have only an hour ago, and in a quite accidental manner, heard of your recent illness. I can think of nothing else until I have expressed the sympathy and concern which I feel for you, and begged you to send me, as soon as you are able, a reassuring word of your convalescence, or, still better, your complete restoration. Fortunately for me, the tidings that you were already on the road to recovery came at the same time with those of your attack: so I have been spared the anxiety and suspense of thinking that a life which is so dear to me is actually endangered. Nevertheless, a strange, superstitious dread still haunts my heart, and my spirit is unaccountably oppressed. I cannot help associating this illness, which comes so soon after my departure, with the rupture of our affectionate, intimate relations. Can it be that you have suffered through me,—you

whom I retain in my memory as an ideal of all that is precious and lovely in woman? I torment myself with a thousand questions, a thousand useless surmises. Can it be I who was to blame? I, who would not wittingly injure a hair of that golden little head which I have so often pressed to my lips? Surely, my friend, this may not be. And yet why does the thought constantly recur to my mind? Was it not yourself who saw that our union was incongruous, impossible? And since my return to Frankfort I am more than ever convinced that all your views were just and correct. I feel ceaselessly impelled to a larger and wider circle of activity; all is restless and at boiling heat within me, everything seethes and ferments in my mind and spirit. What I shall accomplish I scarcely know as yet, but I feel that I shall accomplish much. I cannot sufficiently admire your courage in confronting the necessity of our situation and daring to utter the truth for the sake of our future welfare at the risk of so much present pain. Meantime, dear friend, to whom I owe so many memorable hours of tranquil happiness, do we not clasp hands in closest, warmest friendship still? I long to hear from you the reassuring word, and am, with heartfelt wishes for your speedy restoration to health,

Your true

“GOETHE.

“Please present my sincere regards to your dear

parents, and recall me to the recollection of my good Fräulein Rahel."

In due time he received the following reply :

"SESENHEIM, October 8, 1771.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—It is true that I have been ill; but I am already fast regaining my former health and spirits, and I cannot be grateful enough that my strength held out to the end. It was not till all was over that I succumbed. I feel as one who has been dead, and I seem to have won the right to speak to you from my heart without reserve or timidity, for the last time. No, you are not to blame for the rupture of our relations: reassure yourself on that point, dear friend. I have not to reproach you with a harsh word, an unkind look, throughout the course of our year's intimacy. Always gentle, generous, and noble, I will hold you in my memory as I knew you. But when you praised me, Goethe, in the arbor, for my 'heroism in speaking the truth fearlessly and simply,' every word I had uttered was a lie. God pardon me! but never for a moment, since I had first learned to love you, had I felt that I could not for your sake sacrifice parents, home, and life itself to follow and to serve you. A word, a gesture, a single impulse of the old tenderness, would have brought me to your side again, and made me deny every word I had that minute spoken. But it was not

to be, and I knew it before I began. It was not there that I renounced you. I could easily then assume indifference, for the blow had long since been struck. It was in Strasburg, the day after your visit from Herr Breitskopf, that I said farewell to you in my heart. From that morning I knew that all was at an end between us. I watched you closely, jealously, and everything confirmed my fears. As soon as I was assured of the truth, I took my resolution. Dearly as I loved you, I could not have borne from you the cold neglect, the daily slights and wounds, which I foresaw from a continuation of our existing relations. I wronged you, Goethe: you were generous and upright to the last; but I knew that to ask me in marriage was a sacrifice of your dearest hopes and aspirations. Could I accept a union without love or sympathy? Not only for your sake, but selfishly for my own, I knew that I must reject it absolutely then and there. I thank God again and again that my purpose held firm, my strength endured till the end. Cease to reproach yourself, dear friend: these are events that could not have been foreseen. How could we choose but love each other? But you were destined for a lofty career, and God will chasten me for my foolish weakness.

“I have indeed been very ill, and caused my poor mother and all around me much anxiety. I am glad to be well again, for their sake and for my own. I could not have died with that lie upon

my lips. I have not suffered much : it was nothing but a great weariness and exhaustion ; and it has now passed away entirely.

“ Rahel is to be married in a fortnight. Poor papa and mamma will be so lonely without her that it is a comfort to me to be with them. As long as I feel that my life is useful and almost necessary to these who are so dear to me, I cannot be quite unhappy. But I shall always be alone. The heart that has once loved Goethe can never love again.

“ Pray do not write to me ; it is best that we should remain apart. Only believe in the friendship of

“ALIDE DUROC.”

“ Alide’s answer,” says Goethe, “ to the letter in which I had bidden her adieu tore my heart. I now for the first time became aware of her bereavement, and saw no possibility of alleviating it. She was ever in my thoughts ; I felt that she was wanting to me, and, worst of all, I could not forgive myself. Gretchen had been taken from me, Annette had left me ; but now for the first time I was guilty : I had wounded to its very depths one of the most beautiful and tender of hearts. And that period of gloomy repentance, bereft of the love which had so invigorated me, was agonizing, insupportable. But man will live. Under the broad, open sky, on the heights or in the valleys, in the fields and through the woods, my mind regained some of its calmness. I almost lived on

the road, wandering between the mountains and the plains. Often I went alone, or in company, right through my native city, as though I were a stranger in it, dining at one of the great inns in the High Street, and after dinner pursuing my way. I turned more than ever to the open world and to nature; there alone I found comfort."

EPILOGUE.

LATE in the afternoon of the 24th of September, 1779, two young men alighted from the diligence in the court-yard of one of the principal inns in Strasburg. There was enough resemblance between them for a stranger to have supposed them to be brothers, though one seemed not less than thirty, and the other scarcely past his majority. Both had the same type of face,—handsome in outline, open, joyous, and animated in expression; but that of the elder had the advantage of exquisite refinement and extraordinary intellect. He was not remarkably tall, but the proportions of his figure were remarkable, and there was something majestic in the pose of his head. His companion, shorter, stouter, and more commonplace in appearance, was, nevertheless, a noble-looking fellow. Though by so much the younger of the two, he seemed to receive from his companion the trifling kindnesses which one traveler can render another, with the unconscious grace and dignity of one who is accustomed to be served. A frank equality of friendship must have existed between them, for they used the brotherly *Thou* in conversation; but at times a just-perceptible tone

of deference in the voice of the elder implied some inferiority of station. The elder of these two young men was Geheimrath Goethe, the author of "Götz von Berlichingen," "Werther," and "Iphigenia;" and his fellow-traveler was Prince Karl August, Duke of Saxe-Weimar.

The Prince had violated all regulations of court etiquette by starting incognito on a pleasure-excursion to Switzerland with his inseparable friend. They had already stopped at Frankfort, and visited Goethe's home, and from thence had come by short and easy stages to Strasburg. Having shaken off the dust of their journey and refreshed themselves at the inn, they set out for a walk through the city after sunset. Goethe had not been here since he had bidden farewell to Alide, eight years ago: everything recalled vividly to his mind her beautiful personality and that brief and happy episode of his life. He began by narrating to the Duke some pleasant incidents of his residence and studies here, but gradually, as the twilight deepened, the two friends fell into a serious conversation on the subjects which they most enjoyed discussing together,—philosophy, religion, art, and even love. The image of Alide, an insubstantial, mocking vision, floated continually before Goethe: he could not banish the recollection of all the joy, passion, and misery crowded into one year for that poor little generous soul.

The two young men mounted to the platform of

the Cathedral after the moon had risen ; and there, softened by so many sweet and sad reminiscences, Goethe opened his heart to his friend, and confided the story of his love for Alide,—pointing out in the wide-lying country, illuminated by that silver light, the spot, far beyond the city, where, shadowed by its mountains, lay the village of Sesenheim. He would go to-morrow and satisfy himself as to how that kindly family fared, and whether they still held a friendly remembrance of him ; and he begged Karl August to accompany him on his day's jaunt. But the Prince said it was not fitting that he should be present at the reunion of such old acquaintances. Goethe must go, but he must go alone : if he were coldly received, he would not be mortified before his friend ; and if he met with a cordial greeting, he would be sure that it was owing to a sincere regard for himself, “and not,” added the Duke, modestly, “to the obligation of extending hospitality to a stranger.”

The next day, at noon, Goethe started on his ride to Drusenheim. He left his horse at the inn, and approached the parsonage, just as he had done years before, in the glow of an autumn afternoon. It might have been yesterday that he was here, for all the changes that had taken place in the house or its surroundings. The roses bloomed in the garden, the woodbine flourished over the porch, the same air of serene prosperity enveloped orchard and vineyard and shining meadow ; the immortal

purple light streamed again on the luxuriant slopes of the far-away mountains.

A little girl, some five or six years old, was playing with her doll in the garden. As Goethe entered the gate, she was about to run into the house; but he called her back gently.

"Do not be afraid, my little friend. Does the Pastor Duroc live here still?"

Reassured by his winning voice, she turned towards him, but, without advancing, waited until he reached her. He patted her on the head, and, looking into the wondering, upturned face, he saw a curious blending of the faces he so well remembered. The child had the golden hair, Saxon mouth, and broad cheeks of Waldstein, and the dark, brilliant eyes and rich complexion of Rahel. Goethe had never seen a more dainty, exquisite little creature.

"Will you take me into the house?" said he. "I am an old friend of your grandpapa's, and I should love dearly to see him again. And your mamma,—is she at home?"

"I have no mamma," answered the child, quietly, without taking her eyes from the stranger's face. "How funny his hair is,—all in rings!" she was saying to herself.

The shock of her words was so great to Goethe, as he stood in the bright sunshine, expecting momentarily to see the laughing face of Rahel beam out upon him from the door or the window, that the

sudden tears started in his eyes. All that exuberant life and spirit already passed from earth! He was afraid to ask the child any more questions; but she had taken such a fancy to his appearance that she was bold enough to begin prattling herself. "Papa is away; but all the rest are at home,—grandpapa, and grandmamma, and Aunt Alide." And, with a charming confidence that made Goethe smile again, she put her tiny hand in his.

"Come, and I will take you to the house," she said: "if you knew mamma, I am sure they will be glad to see you; you must be a very, very old friend. I never knew her myself, and I am nearly seven years old. But who shall I tell them is here?"

"I am Herr Goethe," answered he. "Shall you remember that name, my clever little girl? Tell your grandmamma that Goethe is here."

He entered the library with his heart beating high in his breast. What changes he must expect to find in this household where already a breach had been made! He could not realize that Rahel was dead: it seemed impossible that she should not enter this room, where everything reminded him so vividly of her picturesque presence. A cheerful cry of welcome startled him from the gloomy reflections into which he had fallen, and the pastor stood before him with outstretched hands. He was much moved to see again Goethe, who could not fail to remark the traces of age and

trouble in the old man's demeanor and appearance. The greeting of Madame Duroc was not less friendly and hearty than that of her husband, though her manner was quieter and more composed.

Immediately after her came Alide. She was still beautiful, though she had matured and suffered so much since he had seen her. Her face was paler and more delicate, but the large gray eyes had lost none of their soft, tender radiance; her form was slender, and seemed to have gained height and graceful stateliness, owing to the difference in her costume, for she wore a long French gown. The little girl was with her, hand in hand, and Alide advanced to meet her old lover with as much dignity and frank pleasure as if she were a young mother. After she had welcomed him she brought forth the child, saying, with a smile, "I believe you have already made friends with Fräulein Clara;" and then added, in a low voice, "We think she looks like her dear mother: do you find it so? Come, Clärchen, you must shake hands with this gentleman, and when you grow to be an old, old woman like grandmamma, you can boast that you have shaken hands with the great Goethe."

"Why do you put such foolish ideas in the young one's head?" said Goethe, laughing, but with visible embarrassment. "We are already good friends, as you say, and you must not make her afraid of me. It is your aunt who is great," he said to the child, as he bent and kissed her

forehead to conceal his agitation; "and may you grow to be as true and noble a woman as she is!"

Goethe's own words will best describe the remainder of the day which he passed at the parsonage: "On the 25th I rode towards Sesenheim, and there found the family which I had left eight years ago. I was welcomed in the most friendly manner. The second daughter loved me in those days better than I deserved, and more than others to whom I have given so much passion and faith. I was forced to leave her at a moment when it nearly cost her her life: she passed lightly over that episode, to tell me what traces still remained of the old illness, and behaved with such exquisite delicacy and generosity from the moment I stood before her unexpected on the threshold, that I felt quite relieved. I must do her the justice to say that she made not the slightest attempt to rekindle in my bosom the cinders of love. She led me into the arbor, and there we sat down. It was a lovely moonlight, and I inquired after every one and everything. Neighbors had spoken of me not a week ago. I found old songs which I had composed, and a carriage which I had painted. We recalled many a pastime of those happy days, and I found myself as vividly conscious of all as if I had been away only six months. The old people were frank and hearty, and thought me looking

younger. I stayed the night there, and departed at dawn, leaving behind me friendly faces, so that I can now think once more of this corner of the world with comfort, and know that they are at peace with me."

THE END.

"ADMETUS, AND OTHER POEMS."

BY EMMA LAZARUS.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"We give a hearty welcome to Miss Lazarus. Her book has been a thorough surprise. We took it up with the greatest diffidence, especially when we saw that the first poem was 'Admetus.' Admirers of Browning will, we know, think we are uttering something akin to blasphemy, when we say that the 'Admetus' of Miss Lazarus will, in some points, bear comparison with 'Balaustion's Adventure.' . . . We cannot help saying that we have not for a long time seen any volume of poetry which, in so many various ways, gives such promise as the present."—*Westminster Review*.

"The volume by Miss Lazarus is full of good things. . . . The chief poems are all good. She is able to produce vivid effect without display of force. Her subtlety is marked and she leaves no traces of her art. Each of the poems we have named has conspicuous merits. There is something—and not much—wanting to complete her success and place her alongside of the masters."—*London Athenæum*.

"Miss Lazarus must be hailed by impartial literary criticism as a poet of rare original power. She has unconsciously caught, from admiring perusal, more perhaps of the style of Tennyson's 'Arthurian Idylls,' in her narrative and dramatic pieces, than would seem fitly to attend the perfectly fresh and independent stream of her thought. The tone, the phrases, the turns of melody, in her blank-verse lines too, often remind us of the English master whom she follows in the craft of rhythmic diction. But her conceptions of each theme, and the whole compass of her ideas and emotions, differ essentially from those of preceding or contemporary poets. In her treatment of the story of Alcestis and Admetus, one of the two Greek subjects among the poems in this volume, she is far happier than Mr. Browning in his half adaptation of 'Euripides.' . . . The conflict between Hercules and Death, and the return of life to Alcestis, are represented with more

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

force as well as more grace in this poem than in that of Mr. Browning. . . . For the truth of observation and description in her views of familiar natural objects, and for the exquisite finish of each picture, with its appropriate expression of feeling, the first four 'Epochs' can hardly be overpraised. Take, for instance, the one called 'Regret.' . . . Now, what does the reader think of this perfect little poem? We know none of its kind more beautiful, more harmonious in sense and sound and sentiment.

"It will be no surprise to us, after the present volume, if she hereafter take a high place among the best poets in this age of our common English tongue."—*Illustrated London News*.

"We welcome a genuine poetic talent in Miss Lazarus. There are fine qualities in her verse that distinguish it broadly from the ordinary work of women, and from the best work of most young writers."—*New York Galaxy*.

"'Admetus' is a fine poem. We catch now and then a Tennysonian echo in the verse, but there are no feeble lines, and passages both of description and dialogue are full of energy. Emma Lazarus is a new name to us in American poetry, but 'Admetus' is not the work of a 'prentice hand.'"—*New York Evening Post*.

"Few recent volumes of verse compare favorably with the spirited and musical expression of these genuine effusions of Emma Lazarus."—*Henry T. Tuckerman, Boston Transcript*.

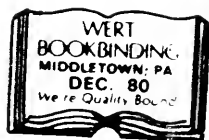
"The verdict must be that Emma Lazarus is a new and good poet, from whom much may be expected."—*Philadelphia Press*.



3 1198 05086 9044



N/1198/05086/9044X



3 1198 05086 9044



N/1198/05086/9044X